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DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL

Important Subjects.

To which are added,

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED AT THE

Lady *MOYER*'s LECTURE,

IN THE

Cathedral Church of St. *Paul*, *London*.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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SERMON I.

The Duty of loving our Enemies ſtated and explained.

Preached before the Univerſity of *OXFORD*, 1733.

MATTHEW V. verſe 44.

But I ſay unto you, love your Enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you.

THERE is an inſeparable Connexion between Malice and Unhappineſs: And it is an obvious Remark, that the moſt malevolent Being in the Univerſe is the moſt unhappy and accurſed Spirit in it, whoſe Temper reſembles that *Blackneſs of Darkneſs*, to which he is reſerved; as on the other hand the great Being, who is infinitely good and an inexhauſtible Fountain of Bleſſings to all his Creatures, is infinitely happy and *bleſſed* in himſelf for *evermore*.

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SERM. I.

That we might, in ſome degree, reſemble God in Goodneſs, our Saviour *virtually* enjoins an univerſal Benevolence, by enjoining *even* the Love of our Enemies; a Love not dead and unperforming, but ſuch as exerts itſelf in the moſt proper and ſignificant Expreſſions, as ſpeaking well of them, praying for them, and doing Good to them. In Oppoſition to the narrow Notions of the Scribes, who taught the People, without any Authority from the Old Teſtament for teaching them ſo, that they were permitted to hate their Enemies; he recommends a prevailing, habitual and unmixed Sweetneſs of Temper, without the leaſt Gall of Bitterneſs in our Compoſition againſt any Man; that Sweetneſs of Temper, which, if it does not give a Man ſuch a *ſhining* and *glaring* Figure, as ſome other Accompliſhments do; yet conſtitutes the moſt *lovely*, *beautiful*, and *agreeable* Character, and gains *unenvied* Praiſe.

The beſt Comment on his Words will be,

I. To ſtate the Nature and Extent of the Duty enjoined, *viz.* the Love of our Enemies.

II. To ſhew the Reaſonableneſs of it.

III. The

III. The Practicableneſs of it.

IV. To ſubjoin ſome Conſiderations, which may enable us to reduce it to Practice.

I. Then, I am to ſtate the Nature and Extent of this Precept.

There are two kinds of Love which we muſt diſtinguiſh here, the Love of *Approbation* or Eſteem; and the Love of *Benevolence* or Good-will. Now it may be impoſſible ſometimes to pay the former kind of Love, in any great degree, to our Enemy, as when his Vices far over-balance his Virtues: We cannot love, with any conſiderable degree of Approbation and Complacency, him, who does not appear, upon the whole, lovely to our Underſtanding. However as human Nature, though degenerated, is ſtill in ſome meaſure amiable, as no body is completely wicked, as Men are generally of a *mixed* Character; leſs degrees of Goodneſs may entitle Him at leaſt to a leſs degree of our Eſteem and Good-liking.

But ſhould it be granted, that we could not regard an immortal Enemy with any Love of *Approbation*; yet ſtill this would not excuſe us from ſhewing a Love of *Benevolence* and Good-will to him. A Parent, for

inſtance, is far from approving a Child who is ſtubborn, diſobedient and immoral; yet ſtill his Love of *Benevolence* and Good-will ſhall continue in all it's Force and Efficacy: and it is this kind of Love which the Scripture ſeems to require from us; *if our Enemy hunger, we are to feed him; if he thirſt, we are to give him Drink.* The Love of *Approbation* and the Love of *Benevolence* are then very diſtinct in their own Nature. Our Saviour, at the ſame time that he expreſſed his *Diſapprobation* and Diſlike of Jeruſalem for *ſtoning the Prophets*; yet exemplified a very *benevolent* and compaſſionate Regard for it: For *he wept over it.*

Even Reſentment does not exclude Benevolence, and we are very often angry at a Perſon for committing a Fault, even *becauſe* we love him. We may then reſent any injurious Behaviour; provided our Reſentment does not deſtroy our Good-will and Affection, and end in Malice.

And as our Saviour loved and compaſſionated the Jews, though he abhorred their ungenerous Treatment of Himſelf and the Prophets; ſo we ought, with the ſame Godlike Generoſity of Soul, to love the Man at the ſame time, that we deteſt his Vices: juſt

as

as we may have an affectionate Regard for a Perſon that lyes ill, but have an Averſion to the Diſeaſe he labours under. SERM. I.

As to the Extent and Degree of this Duty, the Scripture no where enjoins an undiſtinguiſhing Beneficence to Men whether friendly or injurious. We are to *do good to all*, but more eſpecially to ſome, according to their different Merits, Circumſtances, and Relation to us. Yet it is, I think, our Duty to prefer *Compaſſion* to an Enemy, before a Matter of mere *Generoſity* to a Friend, when we cannot exerciſe both together. My Meaning is this: When we can, conſiſtently with the public Good and our own, reſcue an Enemy from the very Brink of Ruin and extreme Miſery by the ſame Sum of Money, which would but make a ſlender Addition to the Happineſs of a Friend, as having already an eaſy or perhaps an ample Fortune; in ſuch a caſe, we ought to ſacrifice the mere *Conveniency* of the latter to the preſſing *Neceſſities* of the former: and that for this plain Reaſon, becauſe we ought to do the moſt Good we can. Now by ſingling out Men of Fortune, whatever Relations may endear them to us, as the Objects of our Favour, we contribute little or nothing to their real

SERM. I. Enjoyments; but by being, what God is in a higher degree, *the Helper of the Friendleſs* and Forlorn, we make the Heart of one, that was *ready to periſh, ſing for Joy*. In the former Caſe our Bounty is like a Shower to the Ocean; in the latter it is like a Shower to dry and thirſty Ground. This is a very important Rule, *viz.* that the extreme Neceſſity of even our Enemies, much more of other Perſons, is to take place of the mere Conveniency of Friends and Relations, and that we ought rather to relieve the Diſtreſſed than to promote the Happineſs of the Eaſy; however the Practice of it be diſregarded by the World.

But to proceed, the Scripture does not require any Acts of Kindneſs to our Enemy, which are confeſſedly prejudicial to our own Intereſts: For we are not to *love our Neighbour better* than *ourſelves*. It no where lays us open and defenceleſs to the injurious Aſſaults of our Enemy: For that would be to give the worſt a continual Advantage over the beſt. It forbids indeed all Deſire of private Revenge; but does not prohibit Acts of public Juſtice, and an Aſſertion of our important Rights againſt the Invaders of them. We may proſecute an Adverſary, not

not indeed to gratify the envenomed Rancour of our Heart; but with a View to the Reparation of our own Wrongs and the public Good. The Law and the Goſpel are very conſiſtent, and we cannot with any Propriety be ſaid to endeavour to return an *Injury*, when we ſtrive to recover a *Loſs* or Damage. *Turn the other Cheek to him that ſmites thee, give thy Cloak to him that took thy Coat*, are to be underſtood with the Allowances, which are made for proverbial Expreſſions, and concerning *tolerable* Injuries; and the Senſe is: Rather run the Riſque of ſuffering a *ſecond* Loſs or Affront of a *lighter* Nature; than, by attempting to revenge the *firſt* and rigorouſly inſiſting upon every *petty* Right, ruffle your Spirits, ſacrifice the Evenneſs and Compoſure of your Mind, and loſe the moſt amiable Spirit of Charity, the *worſt Loſs* and moſt fatal to your Happineſs of any, that you can ſuſtain; it being better to receive than to give any ill Treatment, as it is *better to give than to receive* Favours. A Man of a true Chriſtian Spirit of the two would chuſe rather to *ſuffer*, than to *do* a *hard* thing; and rather to do, than accept a Kindneſs.

Our Mercy *to* our Enemies muſt not be ſo far extended, as to expoſe us to the Mercy *of* our Enemies: only we are rather to put up a *ſlighter* Offence and recede a *little* from our Right; than by the Proſecution of it very probably draw upon ourſelves a very *conſiderable* Injury, and beſides endanger the Peace of our Minds. And in Matters of *greater* Offence, we muſt ſtrive to redreſs our Wrongs by thoſe calm and ſedate Methods, which cool Reaſon ſuggeſts; and not by any Acts of Violence, Outrage and Inſult.

II. Having thus ſtated the Nature and Extent of this Duty, I proceed ſecondly to ſhew the Reaſonableneſs of it.

Firſt, the great Law of Nature is an univerſal, active Benevolence to the whole Body of rational Beings, as far as the Sphere of our Power extends. We were all ſent into the World to promote one another's Happineſs, as being all Children of the ſame Father, *our Father which is in Heaven.* What *Moſes* ſaid to the contending Iſraelites, is applicable to all Mankind; *Why do ye wrong one another ſince ye are Brethren?* And as no Injuries can take away or can-

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cel that unchangeable Relation, which we bear to every one of our fellow Creatures; ſo neither can any Injuries take away or cancel our Obligation to the Duty of Love, which reſults from that Relation, to every one of them: It is founded upon Reaſons, which continue the *ſame Yeſterday to Day and for ever.* SERM. I.

For, do we do good to our neareſt and deareſt Relations *only*, becauſe they are *deſerving?* Do we not think ourſelves obliged to ſerve them merely, becauſe they are *Relations?* Yes undoubtedly. It appears then that the Relation, which we have to a Perſon, not his Worth only, is the Foundation of Benevolence. Now we bear a Relation (though not ſo ſtrict and endearing a one) to a Neighbour, a fellow Creature, or fellow Chriſtian, as well as to a Parent or Son: and if we are obliged to promote the Happineſs of our Kindred, notwithſtanding their Unworthineſs, merely upon the Account of the Relation, which they bear to us; the Relation, in which we ſtand to all Mankind, will infer an Obligation to conſult their Good likewiſe in a leſs degree, in proportion as the Relation is more diſtant. In a Word, this Relation is always a ſtrong Reaſon for doing good,

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good, when there is no ſtronger Reaſon to ſuperſede or ſet it aſide.

If all Benevolence be ſo great a Virtue, our Virtue muſt ariſe higher in proportion to our Benevolence; and conſequently we exemplify the ſtrongeſt and moſt powerful Virtue, when we ſhew the ſtrongeſt Benevolence: but that Benevolence muſt be the ſtrongeſt, which can bear up and exert itſelf under the Weight and Preſſure of thoſe Injuries, with which our Enemies may load us. This way of arguing ſeems to be confirmed by the Words of our Saviour, *If ye love them which love you, what Reward have you? Do not even the Publicans the ſame? And if ye ſalute your Brethren only, what do ye more than others?* This is no more than what is ordinarily done: To be *kind* to ſuch Perſons, is, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to be *juſt* to them: it is rather diſcharging a Debt of Gratitude, than doing a Favour. But when we do good to them that have aggrieved and uſed us ill, this is chiefly praiſe-worthy and acceptable to God. The Love of our Enemies therefore, when under due Regulations, when it does not impower or animate them to do more Diſſervices, muſt evidence an uncommon Energy of Soul and an unuſual Superiority of Virtue. The

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The Man, who is puſhed on by too deep a Senſibility of Injuries to make Reprizals, ſhews by his Uneaſineſs, that his Happineſs lyes at his Adverſary's Mercy; and that it is in every body's Power, who has the Inclination, to diſturb his precarious Repoſe: But he, who, through a firm, reſolved, unconquerable Principle of Goodneſs, returns good for evil, is always ſuperior to his Enemy; his ſuperior in Benevolence and Good-will, that very Excellency, which is as much the very Lovelineſs and Beauty of the *Soul*; as Juſtneſs of Proportion and an agreeable Mixture of Colours conſtitute the Beauty of the *Body*.

And this may ſerve to ſhew, that however forward Perſons of the firſt Diſtinction in civil and military Offices may be to engroſs to themſelves the Character of Heroiſm or any uncommon degree of Virtue; a Man in a private Capacity may be as truly a Hero in Virtue, as they can be in a larger and more publick Sphere of Action. The meaneſt Mechanick, who employs his Love and Gratitude, the beſt of his Affections, upon God, the beſt of Beings; who has a *particular* Regard and *Eſteem* for the *virtuous* Few, *Compaſſion* for the *Diſtreſſed*, and

SERM. I. a fixed and extenſive *Good-will* for *all*; who inſtead of triumphing over his Enemies, ſtrives to ſubdue his *greateſt Enemy* of all, his unruly Paſſion; who promotes a good Underſtanding between Neighbours, compoſes and adjuſts Differences, does Juſtice to an injured Character, and Acts of Charity to diſtreſſed Worth; who cheriſhes his Friends, forgives his Enemies, and even ſerves them in any preſſing Exigency; who *abhors Vice*, and *pities* the *vicious* Perſon; ſuch a Man, however low in Station, has juſter Pretenſions to the Title of Heroiſm, as Heroiſm implies a certain Nobleneſs and Elevation of Soul, breaking forth into correſpondent Actions; than he who conquers Armies, or makes the moſt glaring Figure in the Eye of an injudicious World. He is like one of the fixed Stars, which though, through the Diſadvantage of it's Situation, it may be thought to be very little, inconſiderable, and obſcure by *unſkilful* Beholders; yet is as truly great and glorious in *itſelf* as thoſe heavenly Lights, which, by being placed more *commodiouſly* for our View, ſhine with more diſtinguiſhed Luſtre.

Narrow is that Man's Soul, which the Good of himſelf or of his own Relations and

and Friends can fill: But he, who, with a Benevolence warm as the Heat of the Sun, and diffuſive as it's Light, takes in all Mankind, and is ſincerely glad to ſee Poverty, whether in Friend or Foe, relieved, and Worth cheriſhed; makes the *Merit of all the Good*, that is done in the World, *his own*, by the *Complacency*, which he takes in ſeeing or hearing it done. For he ſhews, by his Complacency, that he would have done the ſame, if his Abilities had been equal to his Inclinations. SERM. I.

Secondly, an Argument may be drawn from the Conſideration of our own Happineſs.

Now to cultivate the ſweet and kindly Paſſions, to cheriſh an affectionate and ſocial Temper, to beget in ourſelves, by repeated Acts of Goodneſs, a ſettled Complacency, Good-will and Benevolence to all Mankind in general; is a conſtant Spring of Satisfaction. By this Means we reliſh our very Nature; it is this Temper, that generally procures us the Peace of the World without; and always gives us that unruffled Peace within, which the World cannot give. It produces a mutual Intercourſe of friendly Offices and Endearments; as Revenge occa-

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ſions a perpetual Round of receiving and returning Injuries. To contract an unrelenting Malice, Sullenneſs and Diſcontent, to let a ſudden Diſcompoſure of Mind ripen into a fixed Averſion and Ill-will, to have a Savageneſs of Nature and an Inſenſibility to Pity; what is this but to make our Breaſt, which ſhould be the *Temple* of *God*, as it were a *Den* of *ſavage* Paſſions? The Scriptures by a very beautiful Metaphor call this Temper the *Leaven of Malice:* For as a little Leaven ſpreads and ferments, till it has diffuſed itſelf over the whole Maſs; ſo Anger and Malice are of that ſpreading Nature, that by Degrees they entirely ſour and embitter the Temper, and engroſs the whole Man to themſelves.

In Acts of Severity, even when neceſſary, there is always ſomething that is irkſom to a gentle and compaſſionate Spirit, ſomething of a harſh and ungrateful Feeling within accompanies them; like Armour, which, though we may be obliged to put it on for our neceſſary Self-defence, yet always ſits uneaſy, cumbrous and unweildy.

Some *cool* thinking Villains there may be, who can lay Plots to injure others with a ſtedfaſt and *ſedate Malice*, and with an *untoward*

toward Complacency; their Minds being like thoſe Nights, which are very *calm*, *ſilent* and *cloſe*, and yet very *black* and *dark*; Nights in which there reigns a *ſullen Stillneſs*. But Men of this Stamp are very rare: The generality of Mankind, when they ſtrive to make *others uneaſy*, certainly *diſquiet themſelves*, and *work out the Ruin of other Men*, as they ſhould do their *own Salvation*, with Fear and Trembling. Their whole Time is engroſſed and their Endeavours laid out, either in forming Meaſures to blacken the Character and ruin the Fortune of their Adverſaries; or in defeating their Attempts, diſproving their Slanders, and countermining their Plots. SERM. I.

Surely thoſe, who indulge this ſavage Bent of Inclination, have never taſted the Joys of an hearty Reconciliation: when that corroding Uneaſineſs, which before oppreſſed the Soul like a dead Weight, is removed; and our Souls appear once more like their great Original, pure unmingled Love, without any remaining Dregs of Bitterneſs and Diſtaſte. At that Inſtant all our Suſpicions, Diſtruſts, and Jealouſies are unravelled, our Enemy's ill Actions and offenſive Behaviour, are ſoftened and qualified by ſeveral alleviating

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ing Conſiderations; and his good Qualities ſhine out with a full and triumphant Luſtre.

Let this therefore be the ſecond Argument for our Benevolence to our Enemies, *viz.* that we ought to cultivate that Love, in which there is no Torment; whereas a Soul embittered with Revenge is a perpetual Seat of War. Could we but trace the inward Workings of a vindictive Mind, could we but know with what tormenting Thoughts the Soul of our Adverſary had laboured between the firſt Birth of his revengeful Deſigns, and the laſt Execution of them; we ſhould rather pity him, as an unhappy Man; than deteſt him, as a malignant Enemy.

It is allowed, that a genuine unmixed Malice, without the leaſt Tincture of Benevolence and Love, without one ſocial and enlarged Affection, is productive of Miſery. But for the ſame Reaſon, that it is confeſſed, that ſuch a thorough and mere Malice, at it's full Growth, is the Source of Unhappineſs and Self-torment; it ought to be confeſſed, that Malice in a much leſs degree muſt cauſe Miſery in a leſs degree, or in other Words, that the degree of Miſery muſt bear Proportion to the degree of Malice and Ill-nature: Not to mention that Rancour in

a lower

a lower degree paves the Way and diſpoſes the Mind for this Vice in a much higher, till at laſt it arrives at it's Fulneſs of Stature. In a word, whatever diſturbs the calm, eaſy Courſe of our Paſſions, muſt make us miſerable. If a Temper thoroughly rancorous render a Perſon thoroughly wretched; then he, who is in part malicious, muſt be in part or in ſuch a degree uneaſy. SERM. I.

A third Argument for the Love of our Enemies may be drawn from the Forgiveneſs of them. Now, the Forgiveneſs of our Enemies is a Duty incumbent on us: becauſe, in the firſt place, Malice is, as I ſhewed before, deſtructive of our Happineſs: becauſe 2dly, we cannot with any reaſon aſk that of God which we are not willing to beſtow: becauſe 3dly, all private Revenge, and conſequently the Deſire of it too, is in the Nature of the Thing unlawful; ſince if it were allowed, it would draw a fatal train of Conſequences after it, and make the World an *Aceldama* or *Field of Blood.* Every one would be apt to fancy himſelf aggrieved, when he was not; and his Anger, a precipitate and undiſtinguiſhing Paſſion, would carry him too far, when he really was ſo. We know that the Malignity of the Offence

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ariſes in Proportion to the Dignity of the Perſon, whom we offend: Now, moſt People are inclined to think themſelves much greater than they are; and conſequently to think the Offence committed againſt them to be ſo too; the Conſequence of which is obvious, if we were commiſſioned to revenge ourſelves. The *Miſts* of Paſſion would repreſent Injuries *bigger* than they are, and it would be impoſſible to proportion the Puniſhment to the Indignity. In ſhort it can never be reaſonable, that one Man's Reputation, Fortune or Life ſhould be ſacrificed to another Man's Paſſion and Malice. Now if upon theſe Grounds an Abſence of Malice is highly requiſite, if we are not to harbour any revengeful Thoughts; how are we to behave ourſelves to thoſe whom we forgive? Are we to behave ourſelves to them as to Enemies? Or as we ſhould to other Men? Not as to Enemies: For then we do not ſincerely forgive them. We muſt then behave ourſelves to them, as we ſhould to other Men; that is, with a Love of Benevolence and Humanity: For Benevolence and Humanity is a Debt we owe to all Mankind.

Beſides,

Beſides, it is unnatural to have a cold *Indifference* to the Happineſs or Miſery of our Fellow-Creatures; when our Minds are *diveſted* of all *Rancour* towards them. Benevolence will naturally ſhed abroad in our Heart it's kindly and gentle Beams, when the Clouds, which the unfriendly Paſſions caſt over the Soul, are removed and diſperſed. SERM. I.

And farther, whatever Diſtinction ſome People may make between *giving* and *forgiving*; yet to *give* to an Adverſary, when his preſſing Exigencies require it, and our Circumſtances enable us, is the moſt ſubſtantial Proof, that we ſincerely *forgive* him.

A fourth Argument may be drawn from the Nature of God.

No Creature ought to counteract his Creator. Now when we harbour Malice and wiſh the Unhappineſs of any Man, we inſolently counteract our Creator, who hates nothing that he has made, and wills the Happineſs of all his Creatures. We are guilty of a flagrant Diſloyalty to the inexhauſtible Fountain of Good, who is infinitely lovely in himſelf, and infinitely loving towards us. Whereas when we ſtrive to be as beneficial to them as we can, we

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act in concert with him, who *makes his Sun to riſe on the evil and on the good.* A malicious Man acts in direct Oppoſition to that *Love*, that *infinite* Love by which he *himſelf* was created, and is upheld, and which alone upholds all that Variety of Beings, that people the Creation.

Laſtly, thoſe who maintain the Unreaſonableneſs of this Duty, if they would ſpeak ingenuouſly, muſt expreſs themſelves after the following Manner. "Man is a very "frail and faulty Creature, his Actions oft-"en bad, and his Thoughts worſe than "his Actions. What then? Muſt I love "no body, becauſe every body has his "Faults? No: But this is my ſettled Per-"ſuaſion. Man however faulty, as long "as he ſins againſt others or himſelf, is "entitled to my Love and good Nature; "but from that moment he ſins againſt "me, he forfeits all Title to Humanity and "Mercy. The Blood of *Chriſt* may a-"tone for Offences againſt the reſt of Man-"kind; but his *own* ſhall expiate thoſe "committed againſt myſelf."

III. I proceed 3dly to ſhew the Practicableneſs of this Duty.

It

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It muſt be granted that it is eaſy to have a Love of Benevolence and Good-will to a Man, whom we have no Malice againſt. The only Queſtion therefore is, whether it be practicable to abſtain from revengeful and malicious Deſigns againſt our Enemies.

And here two ſorts of Men fall under our Conſideration: 1. Men of cool and deliberate Malice, who, like Lions lurking in ſecret Places, can wait a conſiderable Time, till, a convenient Seaſon offering itſelf, they ſpring to Vengeance, and cruſh their unwary Foe: their Reſentment is like a maſſy Stone, ſlowly raiſed; but, when once it is raiſed, on *whomſoever it falls, it will grind them to Powder*. And 2dly, the Men of Fire and Fury, who immediately diſcharge the Malignity of their Paſſion in Words or Actions.

As to the firſt Set of Men; it is certain that the ſame Power of Mind, which enables them to *ſuſpend* the Proſecution of their revengeful Deſigns till a commodious Opportunity, enables them likewiſe to get the *better* of their revengeful Deſires: For a Paſſion ſo *importunate* and *clamorous* in it's Demands, as Revenge, if it cannot be curbed and *controled*, cannot be *ſuſpended*, and

SERM. I. put off; and if it can be *controled*, it can likewiſe be quelled and *overcome*.

As to the ſecond Set of Men, *viz.* the Men of Paſſion and Fury, they indeed will tell you, "God forgive them, it is their In-"firmity which they cannot help: they are "apt to be tranſported into unſeemly Words "and Actions; but the Storm is ſoon over." Theſe are the Excuſes of thoſe, who, when their Anger has ſpent itſelf, are very good natur'd; and continue ſo, till freſh Recruits of Spirits enable their Paſſions to take the Field again; and they might ſerve well enough for thoſe *fierce Animals*, who muſt be held with Chains and Bridles, leſt they fall upon you; but they come with a very ill Grace from the Mouths of thoſe, who call themſelves *reaſonable* Creatures. But the Misfortune is, theſe notable Excuſes are quite ſpoiled, if we conſider that theſe Men can be, and are very often, upon their Guard. They will not fall into an unſeemly Rage before a *great* Perſon, whom they dread and revere: Nay they will *recover* themſelves from a Paſſion, and be *recollected* at the Entrance of a *Stranger*. Now what we can govern and reſtrain in the Preſence of a King or a Superior; that we can cer-

tainly do, if we will, by an *habitual* Con- SERM. I.
ſideration of the Preſence of the King of Kings; whoſe *ſingle* Inſpection and Obſervance ought to have a much greater Influence upon us, than the moſt auguſt *Aſſembly* of Men.

After all it muſt be owned, that a Provocation may be ſo ſhocking and flagrant, that Nature may rebel againſt Principle, and a Deſire of Revenge may as naturally hurry away the Soul, as a Whirlwind does the Body. This is an extraordinary Caſe, and no doubt a gracious God will make Allowances for it. But in all common Caſes, where we have Power and Leiſure to rally our ſcattered Thoughts, and to call in the Succours of *powerful* Reaſon and *all-powerful* Grace; the Duty of Forgiveneſs, however diſtaſteful to our corrupt Nature, is far from being impracticable, if we take an Hereafter into the Account.

To exemplify this by a plain Inſtance; ſuppoſe after ſome great Injury received, a Monarch, in Countries where Monarchs are inveſted with abſolute Power, ſhould tell us, that if we breathed nothing but Revenge, he would condemn us either to drag out a wretched Life in Slavery and Woe,

or to die a lingring Death: But if we heartily forgave, and evidenced that Forgiveneſs by ſome undiſſembled Inſtances of Good-will, he would heap upon us the moſt diſtinguiſhing Marks of his Favour: I deſire to know who would not ſacrifice his Reſentments, to embrace ſuch advantageous Propoſals, and decline ſuch exquiſite Torments? Now, the *only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, has expreſsly told us, that *if we forgive not other People their Treſpaſſes, neither will he forgive us ours: But if we forgive we ſhall be forgiven.* Are Then worldly Advantages the only valuable Conſiderations? May not the nobler Views of recommending ourſelves to our ſovereign Benefactor, an awful Senſe of his Preſence, and a Fear of incurring his Diſpleaſure, who is able eternally to *deſtroy both Soul and Body*, as effectually overcome our Revenge; as the narrow Proſpect of Lucre, or the impotent Power of one, who is only able to kill the Body? What we can reſtrain upon the Account of temporal Advantages; that we can certainly do upon more generous and forcible Motives, if we allow them their due Weight. It may be ſaid, that theſe Rewards and Puniſhments are diſtant: But

then the Conſideration of a ſhort Diſtance is infinitely overbalanced by the Greatneſs of their Degree, and the Eternity of their Duration: and a Man muſt be perfectly good, or deſperately abandoned, or impenetrably ſtupid, that is not alarmed at a full, ſerious and weighty Conſideration of Eternity, an Eternity of Happineſs or Miſery, when for ought he knows he may ſtand juſt on the Brink of it; when at leaſt within a ſhort Term of Years he muſt be, according to his Behaviour here, either eternally bleſſed with God, or for ever ſeparated from all Joy and Peace. SERM. I.

That we are ſo often foiled in combating with certain Paſſions, ſeems to be owing to this: Some Vices being very palatable and delightful, we care not to exert the whole Force of the Soul in Oppoſition to what *pleaſes*, though it be of a *pernicious* Conſequence. We reſiſt them, it is true, but it is *animâ malè pertinaci*, with a *feeble treacherous half Oppoſition*; whereas did we ſet ourſelves *againſt* Vice, as we ought to cleave unto God, with *all our* HEART, *with all our* SOUL *and with all our* STRENGTH; we ſhould ſoon find, that we thought that *impoſſible*, which to a *determined* Mind is

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ſcarce *difficult*; and that we want not ſo much a ſufficient *Ability* to ſurmount the Difficulties of a virtuous Courſe of Life, as a vigorous and animated *Reſolution* to exert it. It is a common ſaying, that few People know their own *Weakneſs*; but it is as true a one, that few People know their own *Strength*, till they are put to it, and *reſolved* in the Proſecution of any Deſign. And the Obſervation, that none ever puſhed their Capacity in Matters of *Knowledge* as far as it was able to extend; holds as true in Matters of *Morality*; that few or none ever exerted their Abilities, as far as they were able to carry them, to the utmoſt Stretch of their Power, in the Purſuit of Virtue.

It has been often obſerved, that our Hatred is moſt implacable, when it is moſt unjuſt; that the *injurious* Perſon is more unwilling to hearken to any Terms of Accommodation, than even the *injured*. And we have a very appoſite Inſtance of this in Scripture. When Moſes would have adjuſted the Difference between the two contending Iſraelites; he, that *did* the Wrong, thruſt him away, ſaying, *Who made thee a Ruler or a Judge over us?* Whether, or no, the injurious Perſon ſuſpects there can never be

be any *hearty Reconciliation, where Wounds of deadly Hatred have deeply pierced*, and therefore thinks it a Matter of Policy, ever to perſecute the Man, whom he has once aggrieved; this is certain, that it is a Torment to any Man, that has not quite diveſted himſelf of all Sentiments of Humanity, to have even a caſual Interview with one, whom he has greatly wronged; it brings to his Mind thoſe Reflections upon his ill Uſage, which he would ſhun as well as the injured Party, and he may ſay to his Conſcience, as well as to the Man, *Haſt thou found me, O mine Enemy?* On the other hand the very Sight of a Perſon, whom we have lately obliged, gives a delicate Pleaſure.

IV. and laſtly, To conclude with ſome practical Advice.

Let us reflect, that we cannot expect to be benefited by our Saviour, as a full *Sacrifice* for *Sin*; unleſs we imitate him, as a complete *Model* of *Virtue:* And this we cannot do without forgiving and loving our Enemies.

Conſider likewiſe how ridiculous it is for Beings to indulge their *Malice* and *Enmity* about little Competitions of *temporal* Intereſt, or

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or Trifles leſs than that; Beings, that were deſigned to live above in an *eternal Friendſhip*, in an *everlaſting Harmony* and *Union* of Minds, and in an *uninterrupted* Circulation of mutual *Endearments*.

We are all Brethren, and why ſhould there be occaſion to adviſe us, as *Joſeph* did his Brethren, not to *fall out by the Way*, when we are all travelling, or ſhould be travelling to the ſame Place, the ſpiritual Canaan?

Can a Mind think any thing here worth an implacable Animoſity, whoſe comprehenſive Views are raiſed as *high* as Heaven, and extended as *far* as Eternity?

Let us think, what would become of us at the laſt deciſive Day, a Day deciſive of our eternal Happineſs or Miſery, if *God* ſhould deal with us with the ſame *unforgiving* Diſpoſition, as we would deal with others.

If God *ſhould be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, who may abide it?* Yet Man, weak Man! who wants thoſe Allowances of Mercy which he refuſes to grant, will not charitably overlook one ſingle Fault, among a Croud of conſiderable Virtues.

Inſtead

Inſtead then of either breaking out into ſudden Burſts of Paſſion, or contracting a ſullen ſettled Gloom of Malice; let us turn the Edge of our Reflection upon ourſelves, and conſider, that, whatever Offences others may have committed againſt God and ourſelves, yet however like a Paradox it may ſound, the greateſt Offender within the Compaſs of every Man's *Knowledge* is *himſelf*. For how many vain, fooliſh, wicked Thoughts he has indulged, how many Bleſſings he has been ungrateful to God for, how many Opportunities to do Good he has neglected, how many Motions of God's Grace, how many Checks of his own Conſcience he has ſtifled and diſregarded; how often fantaſtick Cares have diſtracted, or vain Pleaſures have diſſipated the Attention of that buſy, idle Thing the Soul, ever active and at work, but ſeldom active to any good Purpoſe; this every Man can only know as to *himſelf*. But whether *others* have had all the ſame Advantages, whether they have harboured ſo many wicked Thoughts and Deſigns, whether their Guilt be attended with every particular inflaming Circumſtance, that his is loaded with; this he can never be certain of, except he could dive

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dive into the ſecret Springs of their Actions, unravel the Doublings and Foldings of their Nature, and be intimately preſent to whatever was tranſacted behind the Curtain, within other People's Breaſts. Unleſs therefore Man was, what God is alone, *the Searcher of Hearts*; he muſt conclude the greateſt Sinner he knows, is himſelf *.

You will ſay ſuch a Man has committed a very flagrant Sin, the Imputation of which cannot be faſtened on me. But how do you certainly know, but if he had enjoyed the ſame Advantages of Underſtanding, Condition of Life and Education, the ſame Aſſiſtance of God's Grace, the ſame Checks of his own Conſcience, and the ſame Advice from others; he might have been ſo far from falling into that enormous Sin, that he might have been much better than you? You then alone know the Number, Malignity and particular Aggravations of your own Sins; which ſhould teach you to be candid and forgiving to others, whether they ſin againſt God, themſelves or you; but to be ſevere and inexorable to yourſelf: to let your *Cenſure* and Severity as well as your *Charity* begin at home; and if your

* *See* Law's Serious Call. Pag. 339.

Cenſure

Cenſure *begins* at home, it will find ſo much Employment, that it will *end* at home too, which your Charity ought not. SERM. I.

As the *beſt Writers* are the moſt *candid Judges* of the Writings of others; ſo the *beſt Livers* are the moſt *charitable* in the *Judgments* they form of their Neighbours Actions.

Let us therefore put on as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, Bowels of Mercy, Kindneſs, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any Man has a Quarrel againſt any. Even as Chriſt forgave you: ſo alſo do ye.

SERMON

SERMON II.

Domeſtic Love and Union recommended and enforced.

In two Sermons preached in *Twickenham* Chapel, 1741.

PROVERBS XV. verſe 17.

Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a ſtalled Ox, and Hatred therewith.

IT is hard to form a true Eſtimate of any Man's Happineſs; becauſe Happineſs depends *moſt* upon thoſe Things, which lye *moſt out of Sight*. Thoſe Joys, like thoſe Sorrows, are moſt real, deep and ſtrong, which run on in a ſilent Stream without making any Noiſe: Such are the Joys, which ariſe from eaſy Reflections, moderate Deſires, and calm Content. SERM. II. The firſt Sermon on this Subject.

We ſee the falſe Glare of Greatneſs, which ſurrounds ſome Men, and are apt to gaze at it with a fooliſh Face of Wonder;

SERM. II. But we ſee not thoſe Miſeries, which ſometimes lurk beneath theſe pompous Appearances.

What avails all the Pomp and Parade of Life, which appears abroad; if, when we ſhift the gaudy flattering Scene, the Man is unhappy, where Happineſs muſt begin, at home? Whatever Ingredients of Bliſs Providence may have poured into his Cup, domeſtic Misfortunes will render the whole Compoſition diſtaſteful. Fortune and Happineſs are two very diſtinct Ideas; however ſome, who have a falſe Idea of Life and a Wrongneſs of Thinking, may confound them. For

Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a ſtalled Ox, and Hatred therewith. That is, it is better to have Peace without Plenty, than Plenty without Peace: That, where there is but a ſlender Subſiſtence, yet an uninterrupted Interchange of mutual Endearments, among thoſe of the ſame Family, imparts a more ſolid Satisfaction; than to fare ſumptuouſly every Day, or to live in great and pompous Buildings, great and noble Apartments, every thing great, but perhaps the Owners themſelves.

Thoſe,

Thoſe, that are curious Obſervers of Mankind, love to conſider them in the moſt *familiar* Lights. When Men are *abroad*, they chuſe to *appear* (whatever they really *are*) to the *beſt* Advantage: But at-home, their *Minds* as well as their *Perſons* are in a perfect *Undreſs* and *Deſhabille*. The World is the great *Theatre*, on which they act a *Part*; but *behind* the Scenes, they may be ſeen in their proper Perſons without any ſtudied Appearances. Our domeſtic Behaviour is therefore the main Teſt of our Virtue and good Nature.

In Public we may carry a fair Outſide; our *Love* may be not *without Diſſimulation*, nor our Hatred without Diſguiſe: But at home Nature left to itſelf ſhews it's true and genuine Face, with an unreſerved Openneſs; and all the Soul ſtands forth to View, without any Veil thrown over it. There we ſee Men in all the *little* and *minute* Circumſtances of Life, which, however they may be overlooked by *common* Obſervers, yet give a Man of *Diſcernment* a truer Opening into a Man's real Character; than the more *glaring* and *important* Tranſactions of it: Becauſe, as to theſe, they are more upon their Guard: They act with more of

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Caution and of an Art, than of plain ſimple Nature. In ſhort our good or ill *Breeding* is chiefly ſeen abroad, our good or ill *Nature* at home.

It were to be wiſhed, that we had more Family-pieces preſerved and tranſmitted down to us. * The good public *Magiſtrate* is an Example of uſe to *few* only; but the prudent and affectionate *Father* of a *Family* is of a more *general* and extenſive Influence. For my Part I more admire *Cornelius* the Centurion for that ſhort Sketch of his Character in the Acts of the Apoſtles, *viz.* that he was a *devout Man and one that*

* The Reader will be pleaſed with the beautiful Excuſe, which, among others, Sir *Thomas More* makes, why he did not publiſh his *Utopia* ſooner. The Subſtance of which is: That he was obliged to devote the little Time, which he could ſpare from his Avocations abroad, to his Family, and ſpend it in little innocent and endearing Converſations with his Wife and Children: Which, though ſome might think them to be trifling Amuſements, he placed among the neceſſary *Duties* and *Buſineſs* of Life; it being incumbent on every one, to make himſelf as agreeable as poſſible to thoſe, whom Nature has made, or he himſelf has ſingled out for his Companions in Life. "Dum foris totum ferme diem "aliis impertior, reliquum meis; relinquo mihi, hoc eſt, li- "teris, nihil. Nempe reverſo domum, cum uxore fabulan- "dum eſt, garriendum cum liberis, colloquendum cum mini- "ſtris. Quæ ego omnia inter negotia numero, quando fieri "neceſſe eſt (neceſſe eſt autem, niſi velis eſſe domi tuæ pe- "regrinus) et danda omnino opera eſt, ut quos vitæ tuæ co- "mites, aut natura providit, aut fecit caſus, aut ipſe dele- "giſti, his ut te quam jucundiſſimum compares, *Mori Uto- pia Præfat.* Pag. 4, 5.

feared God with all his Houſe; than if he had been repreſented as the moſt victorious General, that had enlarged the Bounds of the *Roman* Empire: For we learn from it this uſeful Leſſon; that the Influence of a pious Example, *like the precious Ointment from Aaron's Head*, deſcends downwards from the Head of the Family, diffuſes itſelf over the main Body; till it reaches the very *Skirts*, the loweſt members of it. SERM. II.

Our bleſſed Saviour had indeed *no Family* to take care of: The whole World was *his* Family, and all Mankind, that heard and kept his Sayings were his *Mother, and Brethren and Siſters*. Yet ſome of *his laſt* Thoughts were employed upon a Subject, that will be ſometimes riſing uppermoſt in the Minds of tender-hearted Perſons in their laſt Moments, *viz.* "What will "become of my poor defenceleſs Relati-"ons? Who will keep them unſpotted "from the Contagion, and preſerve them "unhurt from the Injuries of this World, "after I am departed out of it?" At the very inſtant, that he expreſſed an unexampled Love to Mankind in *general* by dying for them; yet he exemplified a *particular*

SERM. II. Tenderneſs to his neareſt Relation. *When Jeſus ſaw his Mother and the Diſciple, whom he loved, ſtanding by, he ſaith unto his Mother, Woman, behold thy Son. Then ſaith he to his Diſciple, Behold thy Mother,* (whom you are henceforth to treat and honour as your Mother,) *and from that Hour that Diſciple took her unto his own Home.*

The Pains, that he ſuſtained, the generous Concern, that he felt for the World, could not ſwallow up all his Regards of a more *private* Nature. As a *Man*, he felt the Senſibility of a Son, and the ſoft and tender Workings of Nature within him; as a *great* and a *good* Man, he reſtrained them within proper Bounds, nor ſuffered them, at that great Criſis, to break out into any inordinate Agitations of Grief. He ſhewed us, that thoſe Affections, which Nature has implanted, may be innocently cheriſhed; till we are about to pay the laſt Debt to Nature; and even *then* exert themſelves, provided they do not wound the Peace of the Mind, and ſhock the Soul in her laſt Moments, when ſhe ſhould be as much as poſſible rid of all the Incumbrances of this World, to take her Journey, with more Eaſe and Freedom, to another.

Theſe

Theſe Examples, as well as my Text, point out the Reaſonableneſs and Advantages of domeſtic Love and Union, which ſhall be the I*ſt* Head of my Diſcourſe. SERM. II.

II*dly*, I ſhall lay down ſome Rules to prevent Diſunion.

I*ſt* Then I am to ſhew the Reaſonableneſs and Advantages of domeſtic Union.

Quietneſs under one's own Roof, and Quietneſs in our own Conſcience, are two ſubſtantial Bleſſings, which, whoever barters for Shew and Pomp, will find himſelf a Loſer by the Exchange. *Abroad*, we muſt more or leſs find Tribulation; yet, as long as our *Home* is a ſecure and peaceful Retreat from all the Diſappointments and Cares, which we meet with in that great Scene of Vexation the World, we may ſtill be tolerably happy: But if that, which ſhould be our main Sanctuary from Uneaſineſs, becomes our principal Diſquietude, how great muſt our Uneaſineſs be! There cannot be a greater Curſe, than to have Thoſe of one's own Houſhold one's greateſt Foes; when we neither can live happily *with* Them, nor muſt think of living *apart from* them. It was wiſely ordained by

SERM. II. Nature, that whereas, if our Benevolence ſhould be equally ſtrong to *all* Mankind *alike*, it would be loſt in a *Multiplicity* of Objects, and diſtracted in it's *Choice*; therefore our Benevolence ſhould be the *ſtrongeſt*, where there were the *cloſeſt* Ties of Relation. Our Benevolence is like Attraction, "which increaſes as the Diſtances "diminiſh; and then operates moſt pow-"erfully, when Bodies make the neareſt "Approaches to one another *." It is the Voice of Nature, which calls within us, and Reaſon ſeconds that Call, when all other Circumſtances are equal, to love our near Relations better than our Neighbours, and our Neighbours than mere Strangers.

We then counteract the Deſign of Nature, and conſequently of the Author of Nature, when we do not endeavour to contribute as much as in us lyes to *their* Eaſe and Happineſs, with which our *own* is often eſſentially interwoven. "Is it not ſtrange, "(ſays an ingenious Writer) that ſome "ſhould be ſo delicate as not to bear a diſ-"agreeable Picture in the Houſe, and yet "force every Face they ſee about them, "to wear a Gloom of Uneaſineſs and Diſ-

* See *Hutcheſon*'s *Inquiry*, &c. Pages 197, 198, &c.

content?"

" content *?" Yet this is no uncommon Character. Nay, there ſhall often be a certain Shyneſs, Coldneſs and Sullenneſs in Families, where there is no material Ground of domeſtic Animoſities: And theſe Differences ſhall be often the moſt laſting. For when Anger or Uneaſineſs immediately vents itſelf in Words, the Malignity of the Paſſion is ſoon diſcharged; then it is moſt fatal and pernicious, when the Wound rankles and feſters within, when the Mind preys upon itſelf, without diſcloſing the Subject of its Grievances. SERM. II.

The Affronts, that are put upon us by Strangers, make but feeble and languid Impreſſions in Compariſon: But thoſe, that proceed from Perſons endeared to us by the cloſeſt Relation of Blood and Kindred, wound us in the moſt tender and ſenſible Part. There are two Things, that affect the Heart of every ingenuous Man moſt deeply, viz. *good-natured* and *generous* Offices from Thoſe, to whom we have been *injurious*; and an *ill-natured* and *unchriſtian* Treatment from Thoſe to whom we have been very *kind* and *affectionate*. As for the former, we can make a Shift to bear their

* *Perſian Letters*, Page 128.

Hatred,

SERM. II. *Hatred*, becauſe we have deſerved it: But we cannot bear their *Love*; it quite confounds and overpowers us. And, as to the latter, it is certain, we can endure the utmoſt *Rancour* and *Malice* of *others*, much better, than the leaſt *Coldneſs* and *Indifference* from Thoſe to whom we have made it our *conſtant Endeavour* to *pleaſe*. Very beautiful in this Light are the Words of the Pſalmiſt. *For it is not an open Enemy that hath done me this Diſhonour: For then I could have born it; neither was it mine Adverſary that did magnify himſelf againſt me: For then peradventure I would have hid myſelf from him. But it was even Thou, my Companion, my Guide and mine own familiar Friend.*

Love is a tender Plant, it muſt be kept alive by great Delicacy, it muſt be fenced from all inclement Blaſts; or it will ſoon droop it's Head and die. Indeed in general we ought to be very tender (we can ſcarce be too much ſo) as to what may affect another: Otherwiſe we do, we know not what. For no Man can tell, unleſs he could feel for him, how much another may ſuffer by any unkind thing we ſay or do. An angry Word ſhall give a deeper Wound

Wound to ſome Minds, than an injurious Action ſhall to others, who are of Matter, too hard to make any Impreſſion at all upon them: And perhaps moſt Men feel more in the whole of their Life, from the *ſcornful Reproofs of the Wealthy*, *the Deſpitefulneſs of the Proud*, taunting Sarcaſms and little Inſtances of Ill-will, Neglect and Contempt; than they do from the more *ſolid* Evils of Life. Theſe are the little Thorns and Briars, which, (tho' Men of a rougher Make may make their Way through them without feeling much) extremely incommode Perſons of a more refined Turn in their Journey through Life, and make their Travelling irkſom and unpleaſant; though they do not diſtreſs them ſo much, as the deep Waters, that threaten to ſwallow them up. SERM. II.

But the unkindly Behaviour of *Boſom Friends* and deareſt Relations gives the moſt exquiſite Senſations of Diſtreſs; as on the other Hand, a grateful, humane Deportment from Them gives the fineſt and moſt delicate Touches of Pleaſure. Every trifling Service, that is an Evidence and Expreſſion of their Love, is received by us, as if it were a ſubſtantial Obligation; and nothing

SERM. II. thing can come *from their Hearts*, but what proportionably affects *ours*.

To ſee a well regulated Family acting, as if they were *one Body* informed by *one Soul*, where *if one Member ſuffers, all the Members ſuffer with it*; to ſee Thoſe, who are embarked together in one Bottom, whoſe Intereſts are inſeparably united, and therefore whoſe Hearts ought to be ſo too, *dearer* to us than any other *particular* Objects in this World, and *only not quite ſo* dear as the Good of the World in *general* and our *own* Happineſs in the next; acting in Concert, adopting each other's Cares and making them their own, uniting their friendly Beams, and jointly promoting the common Happineſs: is a beautiful Scene and amiable even in the Sight of that Being, *who maketh Men to be of one Mind in a Houſe. How joyful a Thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity?* To have Thoſe, who will receive us with an open-hearted Chearfulneſs, to whom we can diſcharge the Fulneſs of the Soul, to whom we can unburthen our Cares; and by unburthening we leſſen them: (For Sorrow, like a Stream, grows weaker, by being divided into ſeveral Channels:) To have Thoſe,

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Thoſe, with whom we can ſhare our Joys; (and Joy like Light by communicating grows greater, and burns brighter) this, this is a Happineſs, which a *forlorn Individual* muſt be in a great meaſure a Stranger to, who ſtands ſingle in Life, without any Support to lean upon.

But the greateſt Advantage of a friendly Behaviour to Domeſtics is, that thereby we contract and cultivate that Habit of Benevolence, which is a neceſſary Qualification for everlaſting Happineſs. We are apt to overlook and diſregard our daily Behaviour to one another in Company and the common Occurrences of Life, as little and trivial: Whereas, though they are little in *themſelves*, they are not ſo in their *Conſequences*: They are the very Foundation, upon which we muſt build an Habit of Benevolence. For an Habit of Benevolence muſt be contracted and kept alive, as all other Habits are, by conſtant Exerciſe. Now our daily Behaviour to our Domeſtics gives us an Occaſion for an uninterrupted Exerciſe of Benevolence; and ſcarce any thing elſe does ſo. It is not then enough to ſay or think; we will ſerve our Friends and Relations upon any *material* Occaſions; but, as for a conſtant

SERM. II. ſtant Complacency and Obligingneſs in our *common* Behaviour, to imagine, we may be diſpenſed with from obſerving *it*. For theſe Acts of ſolid, and ſubſtantial Kindneſs we are ſeldom impowered to do; They are extraordinary Emergencies, which do not conſtantly occur: And a ſettled Bent of Good-will muſt be acquired, not by what is occaſional, not by what ſeldom occurs; but by repeated and numerous Acts, by a daily and uninterrupted Diſcharge of the common Offices of Humanity; by *ſaying* a thouſand obliging Things, and by *doing*, if poſſible, *more* obliging Things, than we *ſay*. It is not in every Body's Power, becauſe he has not a Fortune anſwerable to it, to form a ſtanding Habit of Charity by redreſſing the Injured, relieving the Diſtreſſed, and cheriſhing Men of Merit; but it is in every Body's Power to beget in himſelf this lovely Diſpoſition of Mind, by ſtudying to adjuſt his Temper to Theirs, with whom he lives, by complying with their Humours as far as he innocently can, by ſoothing their Diſtreſſes, bearing with their Infirmities, and by incommoding himſelf in ſome Points to gratify others. On the contrary the Indulgence of an occaſional Fit of ill *Humour* paves

the Way to an habitually bad Temper. And to thoſe, who think it a *ſmall* Matter, *Solon*'s Anſwer is a very juſt one: "*Yes, but* "*Cuſtom is a great one.*" Did we ſeriouſly conſider, that as often as we are exerting a Spirit of needleſs Contradiction or venting an ill-natured Wit to mortify thoſe about us, we are cheriſhing a Principle of Ill-will, the very Temper of the Damned; it would, it is to be hoped, put ſome Stop to this Practice. But here the Misfortune lyes: Men are more ambitious to diſplay the *Abilities* of the *Head*, than to cultivate the *good Qualities* of the *Heart*: Though the latter are in every Body's Power; the former few have any Title to. SERM. II.

The habitual Sweetneſs of our Temper, or the habitual Badneſs of it, does not then depend ſo much upon the *great* and *ſurpriſing* Reverſes of Fortune, when the Scene is ſuddenly ſhifted from Proſperity to Adverſity, or from Adverſity to Proſperity; as upon our Behaviour under little and minute Accidents, which befal us every Day.

It may be obſerved, that, (generally ſpeaking,) Men of a generous Education have a more refined Humanity, Paſſions more ſoftned and civilized; than thoſe in very low Life,

SERM. II. Life, where Rudeneſs, Ill-manners, and Brutality too often prevail. Mankind in this Reſpect (ſome think) reſembles *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Image; the *Head* whereof was of fine ductile Gold; but the lower Parts of ſtubborn Clay and inflexible Iron. This Obſervation does not always hold true: There being often great Humanity and Good-nature among the common People, and great Cruelty among thoſe of higher Rank. But, as far as there is any Foundation for this Remark, it conſiſts in This, that the Gentry are obliged by their Character, as ſuch, to ſhew Affability and Complaiſance in their outward Deportment; and theſe *outward* Acts by degrees enter into, and refine their very *Temper* and Frame of Mind; and an Obligingneſs in their whole Behaviour, which is or ought to be their diſtinguiſhing Characteriſtic, begets a correſponding Sweetneſs of Diſpoſition within.

Be that as it will: Did we often reflect, that to with-hold from our Domeſtics in the ordinary Paſſages of Life, and our daily Intercourſe with them, to withhold from them common Civility, that Debt, which we muſt be always owing, and always paying one another; is to withhold from them, what

what They have as much a Right to, as they have to any Property whatever; that every Perſon, whether above us, or below us, has as well-grounded a Claim to good Manners from the Laws of Reaſon and Religion, as he has to his Eſtate from the Laws of the Land: And did we act agreeably to ſuch Reflections, our Minds would be inured to Humanity; the Virtues of Patience, Long-ſuffering, mutual Forbearance would be every Day called into Action, and ripen into Habits; till at laſt we arrived at a thorough-good Temper. From hence we may learn, how little Reaſon any have to complain, that they have it not in their Power to do good. Whereas, if we would act agreeably to thoſe Relations, ſome of which we muſt bear to thoſe about us, *viz.* thoſe of Parents, Children, married Perſons, Superiors, Equals, Inferiors, Friends; there is not a Day paſſes over our Heads, but we might contribute ſomething to leſſen the Uneaſineſs, or promote the Happineſs of thoſe, with whom we have to do; and by ſtudying to promote their Happineſs, we mould ourſelves into thoſe Habits, which are productive of our own, both here and hereafter. SERM. II.

SERMON III.

Domeſtic Love and Union recommended and enforced.

PROVERBS XV. verſe 17.

Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a ſtalled Ox, and Hatred therewith.

THAT is, a moderate Subſiſtence where Love is among Domeſtics, imparts a moré unallayed Satisfaction, than all the high and genteel Enjoyments of Life without that material Ingredient of Happineſs. *Senſual* Pleaſures would be very flat and inſipid; unleſs they were quickened by a mixture of *ſocial*, *friendly* and *liberal* Pleaſures, by the Thoughts of imparting them to, and ſharing them with, thoſe, whom we love and eſteem. It is this, that takes off or qualifies their Groſſ-

SERM. III. The ſecond Sermon on this Subject.

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neſs, and gives them their moſt endearing Charm. One can ſcarce believe, that a rational Man can love *himſelf*, without loving ſomebody, *beſides* himſelf. For he could find nothing in himſelf *worth* loving, if he were of that unloving and unlovely Temper. He would deſpiſe that little Thing, the Heart, if it were intirely engroſſed by *Self*, without a Capacity to harbour any other Gueſt, however deſerving; juſt as he would a poor narrow Cottage which could barely accommodate it's ſorry Owner, but wanted Room to lodge and entertain a Friend. He who feels within himſelf a dull *Indifference* for all *Mankind*; muſt, one would imagine, have a thorough *Diſreliſh* of *Himſelf*.

In a former Diſcourſe I therefore ſhewed the Reaſonableneſs and great Advantages of Union, Love, and a friendly Behaviour among Domeſtics. And in purſuance of this Deſign I ſhall now proceed to ſuggeſt ſuch Conſiderations, as may beget, preſerve and cultivate ſuch an Union.

In the firſt Place, do not delude yourſelf with any viſionary Notions of Perfection. Conſider Men, as they really are, with

with all their numerous Imperfections; and not as you could fondly wiſh them to be. The Philoſophers have remarked what a joyleſs unſightly figure the *material* World would make, if it were diveſted of all it's *adventitious* Ornaments, of all it's Lights and Colours, which are Appearances only, and not the *real Properties* of matter. I am apt to think the *moral* World would make as unlovely an Appearance, if we could view it in a true Light; ſtript of all Diſguiſes; and Men ſhould appear naked and unveiled, juſt what they are, with all their Imperfections, all their little ſiniſter Views, and their Follies, which they induſtriouſly caſt in Shades, expoſed to publick View. But God, who *knows whereof we are made*, and has ordered all Things for the beſt, has wiſely ordained, that our Minds ſhould not be tranſparent, nor our Thoughts viſible to one another; till we arrive at that Place, where we ſhall have no paltry Thoughts, no vain and ſenſeleſs Follies, nothing, that need poorly ſkulk, and ſhun the Light. The generality of Men are like the generality of Books, which we may often be obliged to have Recourſe to, and conſult, upon particular Occaſions; SERM. III.

but will not bear ſeveral Views and Reviews, and to be ſcanned over minutely by a critical Eye: There are few Men, as there are few Books, whom the more we look into, the more we ſhall admire; the more we ſtudy Them, the more Graces and Beauties, which eſcaped us before, we ſhall diſcover in Them. Even Thoſe, whom Nature has ſhewn to the World as Patterns of what it could produce, have yet ſome certain Failures that reduce them in ſome things, to the common Level. If they have ſeveral Excellencies to ſhew, they are *great* Men; they have ſeveral Defects to ſhew, they are *but* Men. 'Tis vain to imagine, we may meet with a *Perſon*, that ſhall pleaſe us in *every Thing*: But this we may do, we may find out *Something*, that will pleaſe us in *every Perſon*. A Man is not fit to live in the World, who does not ſee ſeveral Things, without ſeeming to ſee them; who does not ſee through the little By-ends and ſelfiſh Views, which Men may have; againſt which he muſt uſe all the Reality of Caution and Diſtruſt, with as little Appearances of it as poſſible.

There are not many, who can ſtand the Teſt of a cloſe Inſpection. Their Virtues

ſhine upon us at a diſtance: It is upon a nearer Approach that we deſcry their Failings. The *diſtant* Ground, which is adorned with Variety of Flowers, ſeems to be all in Flower, and to glow with one *continued* and unmixed Luſtre; but, if we were upon the *Spot*, we ſhould diſcover ſeveral Weeds interſperſed, amidſt ſuch a beautiful Aſſemblage of Colours. We may admire upon a ſlender Acquaintance the *Saint*, *Philoſopher* and *Hero:* It is upon a cloſer Survey we always diſcover ſome Tincture of the *mere Man* to ſully the Brightneſs of theſe exalted Characters. And Familiarity, though it does not beget Contempt, where there is true Worth; yet always takes off Admiration: Admiration and Wonder, always the Property of raw unfurniſhed Minds, unacquainted with, and unpractiſed in, the World. Thoſe, who look into, and ſee through, Things, find nothing wonderful, but *One*; and that is He, who is *great, wonderful and holy:* Nothing is truly marvellous, but what he *is*, and what he *doth*. Nay the Follies of Men are often ſo ſtrongly interwoven with their Virtues, that we cannot gather up the Tares, without rooting up at the ſame Time the Wheat.

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SERM. III. Let us therefore in the ſecond Place learn to make proper Allowances, and to repreſent their Failings with all the Softnings of Humanity. Thoſe, that are continually complaining that Things run croſs, that the World is much worſe than it ſhould be, have very great Reaſon to complain, that there is *one individual* Perſon in it much worſe than he ſhould be; who cannot bear the Accidents of Life with tolerable Patience, nor look upon Mankind with Common Charity. Men are uneaſy in themſelves, and then ſhift the Blame off from themſelves upon the Perſons they converſe with, and the Times and Places they live in.

Other Men's Follies and Vices are always inſupportable to thoſe, that are entirely devoted to their *own*. The fuller of Imperfections any Man is, the leſs able he is to bear with the Imperfections of his fellow Creatures. True, regular, ſolid Virtue is *not eaſily provoked*; but when provoked, *eaſy to be intreated*, knows, how to connive at little Follies, and to pardon even conſiderable Errors: Whereas falſe Virtue is peeviſh, exceptious, magiſterial, hating to be put out of it's own Way; diſconcerted with Trifles, and unhinged by ſolid Misfortunes.

Bear then with the Faults of thoſe about you, as you expect they ſhould bear with yours; Faults, which frail Nature cannot well guard againſt, and which therefore *good Nature* ſhould overlook; be juſt to their Merits, charitable to their Failings, and tender to their Misfortunes. *All other* Ornaments fade and decay, and Sorrow or Age makes *Beauty conſume away like as it were a Moth fretting a Garment:* There is *one only unfading* Beauty, one *undecaying* Ornament, which is infinitely more worth than all the reſt, and that is the *Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit.*

Which brings me to obſerve thirdly,

There is a particular Tenderneſs due to Perſons under any recent Affliction, not only that we may not ſeem to *vex them, whom God hath wounded, and perſecute them, whom he hath afflicted*; but becauſe Men are more ſuſceptible of Reſentment, in proportion to the Greatneſs of their Diſtreſs. Men of a Mind involved in Melancholy, like Objects of a dark and black Colour, are more apt to take Fire, than any other. Their diſtempered Souls take Umbrage ſometimes, where none is given. All this we muſt bear with and place to the Account,

not

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not of their natural Temper, but of their Adverſity, which embitters their Spirit, and diſcolours every Object. Handle then gently a *wounded Mind*, as you would do a *wounded Body*, with all the Tenderneſs you can: It will not bear too *rough* a Hand. Remember, that a good-natured Man cannot *give* Pain, without *feeling*, in ſome Meaſure, the Pain which he *gives*. Nay, he cannot even *ſee* a Perſon in Pain, though he does not give it, without *feeling*, in ſome degree, what he *ſees*. As the Ancients held thoſe Places ſacred, that were blaſted with Lightning; we ought to pay a tender Regard to thoſe Perſons, who are viſited with Affliction: Their Perſons are in ſome Meaſure ſacred, they claim a kind of Reverence from us, and are to be privileged from any ludicrous, or inhuman Deportment. The very Sight of them ſhould ſtrike us with a Thoughtfulneſs on the Changes of Fortune in general, and beget in us that delicate Feeling of their own Caſe in particular, which we would wiſh for, if in the ſame diſadvantageous Circumſtances. A *general Civility* is a Debt to all Mankind: But an *extraordinary Humanity* and a peculiar *Delicacy of* Good-

breeding

breeding is owing to the Diſtreſſed, that we may not add to their Affliction by any ſeeming Neglect. The Scripture, which is very particular in recommending every Inſtance of fine Humanity, gives us to underſtand how we are to behave to the Unfortunate in the Words of *Job* xvi. 4, 5. *I alſo could ſpeak as you do; if your Soul were in my Soul's ſtead, I could heap up Words againſt you, and ſhake mine Head at you: but I,* inſtead of doing this, if *you* were afflicted as I am, *would ſtrengthen you with my Mouth, and the moving of my Lips ſhould aſſwage your Grief.*

In the fourth Place, be ſure to obſerve and practiſe the Rules of good Manners. By good Manners I do not mean an inſignificant Punctuality, and a frivolous Exactneſs in the Obſervation of *little Ceremonies*; I mean ſomething of an *higher* Nature, I mean an Aſſemblage of moral Virtues expreſſed in our *outward* Demeanour; a Combination of Diſcretion, Circumſpection, and Civility, Submiſſion to our Superiors, Condeſcenſion to our Inferiors, and Affability to all; more eſpecially a ſtrict Regard to Decency in all our Actions. For the Rules of Decency are the very Outworks of Reſpect, and when they are once broke through, the

SERM. III. the reſt will ſoon be delivered up as an eaſy Prey: And Affection is oftener loſt by *little* Violations of the Rules of *Decorum*, than by any *ſcandalous* and *enormous* Faults. The Queen of *Sheba*, it is obſerved, was ſo amazed at the great Decorum of *Solomon*'s Table, at the Order and Oeconomy of his Servants, the Attendance of his Miniſters and their Apparel, and his Cup-bearers; that *there was no more Spirit left in her.*

If you have any Talent for ſaying *keen* and *ſatyrical* Things, be *ſuperior* to the *Talent* you poſſeſs, by ſhewing how *little* Streſs you lay upon it, when it comes in *Competition* with your *good Nature*. Have no Recourſe to low Stratagems, at once to cover, and yet diſcharge, your little Spite; which ſome do after the following Manner. To attack Men in publick, without any Provocation, for *groſs and palpable* Vices, is, what they care not to do; becauſe their good Nature would be called in queſtion, and their Company ſhun'd: There is a more artful Way at once to gratify their ill Nature, and to avoid the odious Imputation of it; which is to dwell upon the *Indiſcretions* and *unguarded Follies* of thoſe they are converſant with, or to play upon *Subjects*,

jects, that require a very *delicate* Hand to *touch* them *ſo*, as to give the Party *concerned* no *Pain*. SERM. III.

And yet theſe are the Subjects which leave the moſt laſting Sting behind. For ſuch is the Nature of Men: They had rather be thought vicious, than ridiculous. They can bear you ſhould *hate* them for their *Vices:* They cannot endure you ſhould *ridicule* them for their *Follies*. For you do not place in the moſt inſignificant Light him, whom you do not look upon as *beneath* your Hatred: Then you muſt exaſperate a Man, when you ſcorn and make a Jeſt of him, as thinking him *not* of *Conſequence enough* to be *hated*.

The Province of Ridicule is very narrow. *Vice* is the Object of our *Hatred*; *natural* Folly of our *Pity: Acquired* or *affected* Folly is the only Object of *Ridicule*; when not content with what we really *are*, we are ambitious of being *thought* what we are *not*, or *aſpire* at what we *cannot* be. We ſhould be out of Humour with *ourſelves*, if we thought ourſelves *inſignificant* and of *no Conſequence:* And can it be wondered at, that we are out of Humour with *others*, when they give us to underſtand by their Behaviour, that we appear *ſuch* to *them?*

5thly,

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5thly, Never make any Reply to a Perſon, *till* his Paſſion *abates*, and the Ferment *ſubſides*. For to what end ſhould you expoſtulate with a Man in a Paſſion? That he may hear Reaſon? But how can you expect he can hear Reaſon, as long as his Paſſion has got the better of his Reaſon? How can you expect he ſhould hear the Voice of that Charmer, whom Anger has made deaf to all it's Remonſtrances? Wait but till Reaſon reſumes it's Empire; and then ſpeak to him, in the ſofter Seaſons of Addreſs: If there be any Neceſſity for it, if the Affair be of ſuch an Importance as to require a fair Hearing. Otherwiſe, it is a Matter of Diſcretion to drop it entirely, leſt his Paſſion ſhould rekindle; for Reaſon is often retained on the Side of Paſſion, and is ſet at Work, in our *cooler* Hours, to find out ſpecious Excuſes, for what we ſaid or did, in the *Heat* and *Warmth* of Temper. And as you are not to reprimand any Perſon, during the Emotion of *his* Paſſion; ſo neither are you to do it, during the Emotion of your *own*. What the Philoſopher ſaid about puniſhing, you may apply here and ſay, "I would chide you, if I were not "angry." For you will be apt to carry Things

Things too far: Or if you did not, yet what you ſay will have leſs Weight, as it will be looked upon, as the Reſult of Rage and Fury, not the Product of cool ſedate Reaſon. SERM. III.

Forearm yourſelf with this Perſuaſion, and keep it preſent upon your Mind; that, whatever any occaſional Fit of the Spleen ſuggeſts, is either wholly or in ſome Meaſure wrong; that what is really bad, it exhibits doubly bad, and what is not bad, it repreſents ſo: that you no more ſee Things, as they are, in a ſettled melancholy Gloom, than you do in a dazzling Glare; that it is very blind and undiſtinguiſhing, apt to diſcharge itſelf upon Friend or Foe indiſcriminately. We then the *leaſt* ſuſpect ourſelves or our Cauſe to be wrong, when our Paſſions are the warmeſt: and yet then we ought to ſuſpect both the *moſt*. A *Probability*, that we are in an *Error*, *ariſes* in *Proportion* to the *Violence* of thoſe Paſſions which hinder us *from diſcerning* the *Truth*. But an *Apprehenſion* or Diſtruſt, that we are ſo, *leſſens* in the ſame *Proportion*. Nothing is more common, than to hear Perſons, who have very *material* Things to ſay in their own Behalf, injuring themſelves and their Cauſe by mixing

SERM. III. ing *Trifles* with them: The Reaſon of which is, that, though they are Trifles in themſelves, and appear ſo to every indifferent Perſon; yet the Warmth of Paſſion in the Party concerned magnifies them into ſubſtantial Injuries.

6thly, Guard againſt Pride, *from which cometh Contention.* Perſons of Senſe and Virtue will ſeldom differ about Things, that are plainly *eſſential* to the Happineſs of the Family: The greateſt Danger is, that they ſhould Diſagree about *Trifles*, where each will think they cannot give up the Point without yielding the other the Superiority: And the Diſagreement is often the ſharpeſt where the Difference is the ſmalleſt. Do not imagine that every Perſon muſt exactly adjuſt their Temper to yours in every Point, ſo as to be your exact Counterpart. If Men recede in ſome Particulars from their own Inclinations to comply with thoſe of others, there is ſome Proſpect, that Differences may be adjuſted, and a good Underſtanding kept up: like irregular Stones, that muſt have their Unevenneſſes filed off, and their rough Corners ſmoothed; before they can come together, and join to make a compact Building, where there ſhall be Harmony

Harmony and Symmetry of Parts. There is but *one* Being, whoſe Will we ought to ſubmit to *intirely* and *unreſervedly*; and *His* Will is *perfect unallayed Reaſon* without the leaſt *Mixture* of *Caprice* or *Humour*. Vain is all Strife for Superiority, where the *only* Strife ſhould be, which ſhould oblige each other the moſt; and the only Power, that ſhould be lodged in any Perſon, ſhould be, a greater Power of doing good. Never ſtrive to gain an abſolute Sway over any Thing, *but* your own Paſſions. SERM. III.

Be not aſhamed to confeſs, you have been in the wrong. It is but owning, what you need not be aſhamed of; that you now have more *Senſe*, than you had before, to *ſee* your Error, more *Humility*, to *acknowledge* it, and more *Grace* to *correct* it. We double the greateſt Part of our Faults, by the Excuſes, which we make uſe of to juſtify them: Excuſes, which are a kind of *Patches*, when a *Rent* is made; far more unſeemly and miſbecoming, than the Rent itſelf. It is a Sign, a Man is generally in the Right, who has the Ingenuity to own himſelf ſometimes in the Wrong; that he is one of thoſe, whoſe Fund of Reputati-

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on is ſo great, he is not afraid of impoveriſhing it, by taking or loſing a little from it *: Whereas thoſe, whoſe Stock of Credit and Eſteem is very inconſiderable, care not to own any Thing at the Expence of it. Obſerve, what Sin moſt eaſily beſets you, whether it be Moroſeneſs, Pride, Paſſion, Covetouſneſs, *&c.* and place there the ſtrongeſt Guard, where your Nature is weakeſt. Few Perſons have more than one predominant great Vice: Nature has guarded them very well in other Reſpects; here they muſt take Care to guard themſelves. Particularly guard againſt any Inequality of Temper: For no Man can have a true Sweetneſs of Temper, without Steadineſs and a ſedate Way of Thinking: They that ſeem to have it, have only, as one obſerves, a certain Eaſineſs, that quickly turns peeviſh and ſour. Yet, when *our* Affections begin to fall off, and cool *gradually* and *inſenſibly* towards any Perſon; we are apt to imagine *His* are abating toward us. Juſt as the Land ſeems to Voyagers in a Ship to be

* De futuris ſe deceptum eſſe Hippocrates memoriæ prodidit, more magnorum virorum, et fiduciam magnarum rerum habentium. Nam levia ingenia, quia nihil habent, nihil ſibi detrahunt. Magno ingenio, multaque nihilominus habituro, convenit etiam veri erroris confeſſio. Celſus, l. 8. Cap. 4.

retiring

retiring from them, when they are retiring from the Land. SERM. III.

7thly, Take care to diſtinguiſh between a Perſon's *general ſtanding* Sentiments of you, when he is perfectly calm and undiſturbed; and his *occaſional* Sentiments, when ſome croſs Accident may have ſoured his Temper. Conſider, what he is *for a Conſtancy* towards you; and not what he may be *now and then*, when his Spirits are ruffled and over heated. Unkindly Thoughts of us, which vent themſelves in unfriendly Expreſſions, may be only *occaſional Viſitants*, which tarry but an Hour; whereas tender and endearing Ideas may be the conſtant Inhabitants of his Mind. You muſt reflect that there is no ſuch thing as maintaining a friendly Intercourſe, without overlooking Things of this Nature. He who thinks he has diſcharged *every* Duty without any Failure in Point of Kindneſs and Friendlineſs to his Domeſtics, has forgotten *one* Duty reſpecting *himſelf*, that of ſelf Examination. For the leaſt Reflection upon himſelf will ſerve to ſhew, that he has ſometimes ſaid Things, that had better been left unſaid; that he has been out of Humour, when there was not a ſufficient

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Reaſon for his being ſo; and has gone too far, when there was. A wife and a good Man will therefore make proper Allowances, and think, that as a generous Enemy may ſometimes through a Fluſh of good Humour ſay an handſom Thing in our Behalf, and *deviate* into Praiſe; ſo a firm Friend, through a Surprize of ill Humour; may let fall a diſobliging Expreſſion. And whereas an haſty Temper is immediately for proceeding to Extremities; a prudent Man goes more leiſurely to Work, and adviſes a Friend, perhaps *he has not ſaid* what has been reported; and *if he have, that he ſpeak it no more.* And indeed, without ſuch a Procedure, all Friendſhips would be precarious; they would lye at the Mercy of thoſe, who were malicious enough to do us an ill Office.

But above all, laſtly, Religion is abſolutely neceſſary to preſerve domeſtic Union. For Families are but little Societies, as Societies are larger Families; and therefore Religion, which is confeſſedly the beſt Bond and Cement of Union in States and larger Communities, is likewiſe ſo in little domeſtic Governments: And Family Prayer is as much a Duty in this ſmaller Sphere of

of Action, as public Worſhip is a national Concern. It is therefore incumbent upon thoſe, who preſide over a Family, to impreſs a Senſe of Religion upon thoſe, who are beneath them: But to do that effectually, they themſelves muſt be firſt affected with a ſerious and hearty Senſe of it. Their Domeſtics will every Day be Witneſſes of their *ill* Qualities, ſuch as Anger, Impatience, *&c:* It were to be wiſhed therefore, that they would let their *good* Qualities, if they have any, ſhine forth before them. It muſt be with very ill Grace, *they* can complain of the Diſobedience of Servants to them, who let them ſee by their whole Behaviour, that they are regardleſs of their great and common Maſter, their *Maſter which is in Heaven.* Why ſhould they, whom much *nobler* Motives have no Influence upon, expect that the Fear of offending *them* ſhould reſtrain their Dependants? People may complain of the Badneſs of Servants, the Undutifulneſs of Children, and the univerſal Depravation of Morals; but ſuch Complaints come better from any, than from thoſe, to whom that Depravation is in a great Meaſure owing by their Careleſsneſs and unguarded Levity of Tem- SERM. III.

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per, to ſay no worſe; not having the Prudence to keep their Follies to themſelves, but ſcattering the Infection among their Inferiors and Attendants.

Be then ſeriouſly and ſolidly good yourſelf; and others, if they are ſuſceptible of it, will learn Goodneſs from you; and obey you more out of a Principle of Love, than Fear. Revere *yourſelf*, if you would have your *Inferiors* revere you:—Revere yourſelf—by exemplifying ſuch a ſteady and regular Practice of every Branch of Virtue, as will command their *inward* Homage, the Homage of the *Mind*; and then *outward* Marks of Reſpect will follow of Courſe without Reluctance or Conſtraint. Every one will reverence and acknowledge that Worth, of which you ſeem inſenſible; and acknowledge and reverence it the *more*, *becauſe* you ſeem inſenſible of it. We inſenſibly ſlide into the Manners of thoſe, with whom we daily converſe, and conſtantly live: We catch the Flame of Virtue from them, by being always near to them. For Goodneſs does not only communicate Favours and Kindneſſes; it even in ſome meaſure communicates itſelf. Juſt as thoſe, who have been long among the moſt fragrant Objects,

not only are delighted with the Odour, that breathes from them; ſome of the very Fragrancy cleaves to, and remains with them: They become fragrant themſelves, by ſtaying long among Objects, that are ſo. SERM. III.

Carry then their Minds upwards from yourſelf, who are the Head of a ſmall Family, to him, of *whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth* is *called.* Conſider that the joint Prayers of a Family are as neceſſary to derive a Bleſſing upon, or avert a Calamity from, a Family; as public Prayers are to deprecate the Judgments, or conciliate the Favour of the Deity to a Nation. So may He, who *maketh Men to* be of *one Mind in an Houſe*, preſerve you from all the Miſeries, that muſt fall upon a Family embroiled, and *a Houſe divided againſt itſelf!*

Thus, when you have tinctured their Minds and your own with Religion, you will find that the Union of Souls was but *begun here*; it will be perfected *above*, where Love and *Charity never fail.* And Death, which diſſolves the *Union* of *Soul* and *Body*, cannot diſſolve the *inviolable* Union of *virtuous* Hearts joined together in pure, unſully'd Friendſhip. Thoſe, who were *lovely* and loving in *their Lives*; ſhall not be,

SERM. III. even by *their Deaths*, *divided* for ever. Separated for a while, they ſhall meet again, where there ſhall be no ſecond Separation, where they ſhall continue to be *of one Heart and of one Mind*.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The Duty of an uniform and unreſerved Obedience.

In two SERMONS.

St. JAMES II. 10, 11.

Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.

For he, that ſaid, do not commit Adultery; ſaid alſo, do not kill.

THERE is this Difference between *mere* Taſte and Judgment: That the former is our liking one Thing more than another, without being able to aſſign any ſufficient *Reaſon* why we do ſo; mere Taſte being an *arbitrary* Agreement between the Faculty and the Object. Whereas Judgment is a *real* Agreement between the Faculty and the Object, founded upon *Reaſon*, *Truth*, and the *Nature* of Things. SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. Things. Thus there is often an *unaccountable Agreeableneſs* of *one* Sort of *Food*, more *than* another, to the *Palate*, where *both* Sorts are perhaps *equally* good in their Kind, and conducive to Health. Thus too, an *arbitrary* Reliſh of one Virtue more than another, and an *undue* Preference often takes Place, without bringing Things to the Bar of impartial *Reaſon*.

The Deſign of the Text is therefore to guard againſt that Biaſs of Temper, which, if we are not upon our Guard, may miſlead us to over-rate ſome Duties, merely becauſe they *fall in* with our Taſte and Inclination; and to undervalue and diſregard others, merely becauſe they *do not*.

The Apoſtle does not enjoin an unſinning Obedience; but only enters a Caveat againſt a wilful Diſobedience to any of the divine Laws, under a Pretence of keeping the reſt. Farther, the Text does not take in Sins of Surprize and Infirmity: It is plainly confined to deliberate Crimes, by the next Verſe, where none but ſuch are ſpecified. Great Allowances will be made for the Weakneſſes of Nature: Life is a great Journey, and there is no ſuch Thing as *travelling* through the ſeveral Stages of it, without

without making *one falſe Step.* It is the Property of God that *his* Wiſdom *never ſlumbers nor ſleeps: Ours* alas! often lyes in a great Meaſure dormant. In this Senſe therefore a *Reſpect* to *all God's Commandments* is enjoined, that we do not indulge ourſelves in an habitual Breach of any *one* of them, *knowing* it to be ſuch: For that is not the Weakneſs of Nature, it is an obſtinate Rebellion.

The Meaning then of the inſpired Writer is this: "Whoſoever knowingly, deliberately, and habitually offends in one Point, "upon an impious Preſumption of compounding with God for that Sin, which "is moſt palatable to him, by a ſtrict Obſervance of other Duties, that do not "croſs his reigning Paſſion; ſuch a Man's "*Religion is vain.*" Then follows the Reaſon. *For he, that ſaid, do not commit Adultery; ſaid alſo, do not kill,* i. e. "If "thou haſt any *Regard* for the divine "Lawgiver, *his* Sanction is alike impreſſed "upon *all* his Laws; and he giveth thee "no more a Diſpenſation to commit this "*one* Sin, than he does to commit *every* "*other.* But, if thou haſt *no* Regard for "him; then thy Actions, however *ſeemingly* "virtuous,

SERM. IV. "virtuous, are but as it were an *uninformed* "Carcaſe: They want that *Principle* of "Duty, which is the very *Soul* of Virtue, "and ſhould *actuate* the whole *Body* of our "Performances. It is as if he had *ſaid*, to "go on in one *uninterrupted Track* of diſ- "obeying the Deity in any *one* known Point, "is in effect to diſclaim *all* Obedience to "him." For can that Man be influenced by a reverential Awe of the Deity who not *occaſionally*, *now* and *then*, in an *unguarded* Hour, is overtaken in a Fault; but *conſtantly* and *knowingly*, through the main *Tenour* of his Life, continues to counteract the Will of his Creator in any Point? It is the Obſervation of a *Roman* Hiſtorian, that, though his Countrymen were ſometimes defeated in a ſingle *Battle* with their Enemies; yet they were always victorious in the whole *Courſe* of the *War* over every one of them. Thus it ought to be with us, who may, now and then, through Surprize and Inadvertency, be foiled by our Paſſions in ſome few *Conflicts*; but yet, in the *main* of our ſpiritual *Warfare*, muſt gain *Ground* over every one of them, and, upon the *whole*, be *Conquerors*. No one Sin muſt *reign* in us: The only true Religion is to do,

whatever *God* commands; and that, *becauſe* he, from whom we have received all that we have, and to whom we owe all that we can do, commands it. All other Schemes open a Door to Confuſion and Licentiouſneſs. We muſt either follow God's Will, and be determined by it; or we muſt ſet up our own Head-ſtrong Self-Will in Oppoſition to his unerring Wiſdom.

In diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I ſhall Iſt, Shew the Reaſonableneſs of an unreſerved and uniform Obedience to God.

IIdly, I ſhall give ſome Inſtances, and point out the Folly, of a partial Obedience.

IIIdly, I ſhall anſwer ſome Objections againſt the Duty, which the Text enjoins.

IVthly and laſtly, I ſhall draw ſome practical Inferences from what has been laid down.

I. Then I am to ſhew the Reaſonableneſs of an unreſerved and uniform Obedience to God.

To think of coming to a ſcandalous *Compoſition* with God, by offering him *Part* of our Duty, inſtead of the *whole* Debt we owe him; to imagine he will tamely

SERM. IV. tamely accept juſt ſuch a ſmall *Pittance* of Service, as our *Luſts* can *afford him*; is as highly affrontive, as to offer him *no* Service *at all*. To ſingle out *ſome* Parts of our Duty as obligatory, and to reject *others*, which have the *ſame* binding Sanction, becauſe they *interfere* with ſome beloved *Inclination*; in ſhort, to *chooſe* for *ourſelves*, is ſubverſive of *God's whole Authority* over us: It is to dethrone *him*, and ſet up an *Uſurper* in his ſtead, *viz.* our own Fancy, or Intereſt, or Paſſion. To make the Caſe plainer; ſuppoſe a Servant ſhould only execute his Maſter's Orders, when they fell in with his own *Humour*; but ſhould continually diſobey him when they did *not* ſuit his *Fancy* or *Convenience*: Could ſuch a Man be ſaid to obey his *Maſter*, or only to gratify *himſelf*? He who does not obey God at all, is guilty of all; and he does not obey *God* at all, who makes *himſelf* his *own* Legiſlator. To obey God *rightly*, is to obey him as *ſupreme* Lawgiver: Which can never be done, while he only maintains a *divided* Empire in our Breaſts: An Empire divided between him, who is the univerſal Emperor of the whole World; and ſome little inſignificant worthleſs Paſ-

ſion

ſion of our own; a fit Rival indeed to con- SERM. IV.
teſt it with our Maker!

The main Proof of our Virtue is the Superiority and Aſcendant of Reaſon over our Paſſions. And the main Proof, that Reaſon has the Aſcendant over our Paſſions, is the Victory of Reaſon in *thoſe* Caſes, where the Paſſions make *head* againſt it. For, if Reaſon only maintains it's Sway, where the Paſſions fall *in* with it, or do *not oppoſe* it; this is no more a Proof that we are virtuous; than it is, that a Man is not a Lunatic, becauſe he may argue tolerably well, and coherently on *indifferent* Points, that do not deeply touch and intereſt him. The only deciſive Teſt, whether he is a Lunatic or not, is to bring him to *that* Point, which is ſuppoſed to have deeply *affected* him, and at laſt *unhinged* his Brain: However plauſibly he may reaſon on other Subjects, we ſcruple not to pronounce him a Madman, if *here* he flies off into *Jargon*, *Wildneſs*, and *Extravagance*. To obey God in Points indifferent, where we have no Temptation to offend, is doing nothing at all. *One* exceſſive Paſſion is enough to engroſs the *whole* Man: And therefore, if we do not give into other Vices, it is not

ſo

SERM. IV. ſo much owing to the *Strength* of our Reaſon, as to the *Weakneſs* of our Inclinations for *other* Things.

People are not aware, what they are doing when they indulge any one Vice. For any one *habitual* bad Quality will, in Proceſs of Time, as effectually deſtroy every Thing morally good in us; as even *many bad* Qualities. When it has thoroughly got Poſſeſſion of your Heart, it will ſoon draw the Head after it. It will turn the whole Bent of your Purſuits, Inclinations, and Studies one way; make you indifferent to whatever is not ſubſervient to it's Intereſt, and hate whatever is oppoſite to it. Single out what bad Quality you pleaſe: Let it be, what ſome will think a very ſmall one, the Love of *Eaſe*. It will not indeed put you upon *deſperate* Crimes; for that is contrary to it's *Nature*: But it will end in a total *Abſence* of every *active* Duty in Life: It will be a kind of a Froſt, that, as long as it laſts, locks up all the Virtues of the Soil. But if Idleneſs, the moſt *unperforming* of all the Vices, bears ſo great a Sway; it will be needleſs to obſerve, that when any one of the more *enterpriſing* Vices, ſuch as the Love of Honour, Money,

ney, or Pleaſure, has got Footing, and eſtabliſhed it's Intereſts; it will ſupplant and turn out every Virtue: Juſt as one wicked Favourite, who has crept into his Maſter's Affections, will by degrees prevail with him to diſplace and remove every faithful Servant, that may ſtand in his Way*. SERM. IV.

On the other hand, the Man, that conſtantly practiſes any one Virtue, *merely becauſe* it is the *Will* of *God*; will be *diſpoſed* to practiſe every *other* Virtue for the ſame Reaſon. It is true, his Situation in Life may not empower him to exemplify every other Virtue; Yet he, who is grateful to the Rich, in low Circumſtances, upon a fixed Principle of Virtue; would undoubtedly be charitable to the Poor, in a higher Sphere. Any *one habitual* Duty, which we embrace to *recommend* ourſelves to our *Maker*, calls forth into Action thoſe *other* Duties, which *are* in our Power; and gives us a

* It is *Salluſt*'s Remark on a *Roman* Conſul, that he had many excellent Endowments both of Body and Mind, all which his Covetouſneſs rendered uſeleſs. *In Conſule noſtro* [*Beſtia*] *multæ bonæque artes animi et corporis erant, quas omnes avaritia præpediebat.* Sal. de Bello Jugurthino.

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Reliſh and *Love* for thoſe, that are *not ſo*†. Juſt ſo he, who conſcientiouſly abſtains from any Sin, *ſolely becauſe* it is *diſpleaſing* to his *Creator*; will find the ſame Motive operating much farther, and inclining him to forbear every *other* Action, that he *knows* is *offenſive* to him. No one great Virtue (Virtue upon Principle) will come ſingle: The Virtues, *that be her Fellows, will bear her Company*, and with *Joy and Gladneſs* enter into the ſame Heart.

But this brings me to my

II. Second General Head, which is to ſhew the Folly of a partial Obedience, in ſeveral inſtances.

Few, very few, ſeem to conſider, that one habitual Vice cuts them off from the Benefits of Chriſtianity. We relapſe into the worſt Part of Popery. We will not allow the Pope (and we have good Reaſon for not allowing him) to deal out his Diſpenſations and Indulgences to us: But we ſet up as many private Popes, as there are Men: We allow *ourſelves*, unauthoriſed by God, to deal our Diſpenſations and Indul-

† *Inter omnes Philoſophos conſtat, qui unam haberet, omnes habere Virtutes.* Cicero.

gences

gences from our favourite Sins, with a very liberal Hand. Nothing is more common, than to ſubſtitute ſome Part of our Duty, for the whole.

Of this we have a pregnant Inſtance in thoſe, whom the World miſcals *mere moral* Men. True Morality, in the largeſt Senſe of the Word, conſiſts in acting agreeably to thoſe Relations, which we bear to our Creator, and Fellow-Creatures. It takes in even our Duty to our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer; unleſs either Gratitude be no Part of Morality; or he, who was the Author of our eternal Salvation, be entitled to no Gratitude from us. But a *mere* moral Man, in the Language of the World, is one, who lives in a State of open Diſregard, or at leaſt of faſhionable Indifference, to Religion in general; yet ſhall do ſome generous and good-natured Actions, and never be guilty of any flagrant Breach of Honeſty. He ſhall condemn the Man, who is wanting in proper Returns of Gratitude and Affection to his Fellow-Creatures: But never condemns himſelf, who continually receives, and never acknowledges the Favours he receives from the *Author of every good Gift*, and *therefore*

SERM. IV. the Object of every *grateful Sentiment*. He ſhall think it *Superſtition* (ſo far he thinks right) to lay a great *Streſs* upon mere Ceremonies: But he never thinks, that *not* to comply with innocent Ceremonies is a criminal Singularity of Temper. He ſhall expreſs as great Diſpleaſure againſt ſome little Wrongneſſes of acting in Men of religious Characters, as if they were ſolid Grievances and ſubſtantial Crimes: But ſhall not reflect that to be diſturbed at the Foolery of others is a greater Foolery in himſelf, than any they are guilty of. He is one, who does not conſider, what would be the Conſequence, if the *faſhionable* Religion, or rather the *no*-Religion of our modiſh Gentlemen ſhould become the Religion of *labouring* People in low Life? What, if *they* ſhould entertain ſuch *indigeſted* Notions of God's *Mercy*, as to ſhut out all Apprehenſions of his *Juſtice* and *Vengeance?* That therefore, whatever *other* Inſtances of Benevolence they may pretend to; yet the *greateſt* and moſt *ſignificant* Inſtance of Benevolence, that Men, whoſe Example will have any Weight and Influence, can at preſent give, is, by a publick conſpicuous and exemplary Adherence to

Religion, to put a Stop to that Ungodli- SERM. IV.
neſs and general Depravation of Morals, which, if not put a Stop to, muſt plunge Men into Diſtreſſes in this World (not to mention eternal Damnation in the next) which no Charities, how great ſoever, can redreſs. Thus have I deſcribed a moral Man, in the Language of the World; but in the Language of Reaſon, as immoral a Man as can be conceived. For he lives daily in the uninterrupted Practice of Immorality of the deepeſt Dye, *viz.* Ingratitude to his Sovereign Benefactor; from whom he has received every thing, and to whom he can return nothing, but Obedience and Thankſgiving, the Tribute of a grateful Heart.

What ſhall we think of this Set of Men? It would be uncharitable to ſuppoſe them determined Atheiſts: What is moſt likely, is, that they imagine God will accept the ſocial Duties, in lieu of Piety. And yet true ſubſtantial Morality is inſeparably connected with the higheſt Regard to the Deity; and it is an unnatural Divorce to part them aſunder. What is ſaid of the Sciences, holds as true of our Duties to God and Man. There is that Harmony, Alli-

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ance and Correſpondence between them, that, if one Link fails, the whole Chain muſt fall aſunder: and the laſt Link of the Chain muſt be faſtened to the Throne of God. If one Branch of Morality be neglected, if *one Member* of our Duty *ſuffers*, ALL *the Members muſt ſuffer with it*. And, if *one Member be honoured*, *all the Members* will *rejoice with it*. *Thy Prayers and thy Alms*, ſaith the Scripture, *i. e.* thy Piety and Charity, both acting in Concert, and uniting their friendly Beams, *are come up, as a Memorial before God*. Charity and Humanity muſt beautify and adorn our Religion; and our Religion muſt ennoble, and give a Conſiſtency and Steadineſs to, our Humanity.

Diſmiſſing the mere moral Man, let us proceed to thoſe, who pretend to be of a religious Turn. And here do we not find ſome, who, though ſcandalized at the little Levities and innocent Freedoms of Men of a gayer Make, are addicted to Vices of the graver Sort, ſuch as Cenſoriouſneſs and Pride, *truſting in themſelves, that they are righteous, and deſpiſing others?* Are there not ſome, who do not reflect, if we may judge by their Conduct, that there is a ſtrong attractive Charm in the Strictneſs

and Regularity of Piety, when attended by all the eaſy Graces of Humanity and Chearfulneſs; like Beauty and Regularity of Features far more powerful when ſoftened by an Air of Sweetneſs and Humility; than, when it puts on a diſtant and forbidding Mien? Strict in little Ceremonies and outward Obſervances, which they *ought not to leave undone*; ſome only omit the *weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Faith and Mercy:* like thoſe Workmen, who can hit off ſome *Under*-Parts with a frivolous Exactneſs; yet in the *main Subſtance* of the Work, in the eſſential and conſtituent Parts of it, are aukward and ungainly Performers: becauſe they know not how to give Order, Juſtneſs and Proportion to the whole, throughout the ſame. Not that Religion is at all in Fault: It is their original or acquired Littleneſs of Temper, which makes them incapable of reaching thoſe Heights and Elevations, which Religion teaches and inſpires. The ſame little Temper, which, when it takes a *religious* Turn, confines itſelf to mere Modes and Ceremonies, without any enlarged and generous Affections towards God and towards Man; would, if it had applied itſelf to *Learning*, have em- SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. ployed itſelf in collecting various Readings of no Uſe, in ſettling Points and Commas with an inſipid Accuracy, or in getting together impertinent Curioſities, and difficult Trifles. Do they uſe Religion, as an intimate *Friend*, whom they admit, with an *unreſerved* Affection, into the *inmoſt* Receſſes of the *Soul*, and to whom they have recourſe, with *Pleaſure*, on *every* Occaſion? Or rather do they not treat it as a mere faſhionable *Acquaintance*, to whom they *now* and *then*, with a *flat* Civility, pay a *ceremonious* and *formal* Reſpect, ſtudious to keep up each *cold Decorum*, a certain Sign, there is no kindly Warmth of Affection at the *Heart?* Religion has all the *Outſide* of Regard from them, and wants *nothing* but (what is indeed *All* in All) an *inward Love* and *Reliſh* for it. They conſider Religion, as only requiring ſome few broken occaſional Acts; not as enjoining ſuch a ſettled Habit and Frame of Mind, as ſhall influence them in the common Occurrences of Life. *I was glad*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *when they ſaid unto me, we will go into the Houſe of the Lord.* His Religion, you ſee, had deſcended deeply into his Heart, which made him gladly embrace every Opportunity of expreſſing

preſſing it publickly in his Actions. Whereas the Religion of many is ſomething to ſave Appearances, a kind of *Beauty-waſh* to *colour* over and give a *finer Tincture* to the *Surface* of their Actions, without going *deeper*, or mingling with the *Vitals*, without promoting the *Health* of the Soul. Hence it is, that Self-Examination, Meditation and Watchfulneſs are Duties ſo little practiſed. Cuſtom and common Decency require, that Men ſhould ſometimes go to Church, and ſay their Prayers; otherwiſe they might incur the Imputation of Atheiſm: But common Decency, Cuſtom, and Fear of what the World will ſay, do not oblige us to Self-Examination, Meditation and Recollection; Duties to be tranſacted, far from the Eye of the World, between God and ourſelves. Hence, however neceſſary, they are too generally neglected. Men find no Void of Piety and Goodneſs within; becauſe they never look within.

Inſtances of a partial Obedience are numberleſs. Nothing is more common, than for Perſons to become ſo enamoured of one Branch of Virtue, to which they are peculiarly devoted, as to comprize all Excellencies in it; and for it's Sake to depreciate

SERM. IV. ciate every other Duty. If we are of an open and converſable Nature: then, to be ſure, the ſocial Duties are all in all, we have no Thoughts of living unto Him, by whom we now live, and with whom we are to live for ever: If we are of a recluſe and melancholy Turn, then all Worth conſiſts in ſequeſtring ourſelves from, and ſo becoming, in a great Meaſure, uſeleſs to, the World. Piety or Benevolence, Generoſity or Oeconomy, Courage or Prudence are to be extolled at the Expence of each other. Whatever be the favourite Virtue, it is like an *Empiric's Noſtrum:* it ſuperſedes the Uſe of all other Virtues, juſt as that does of all other Medicines, and infallibly preſerves the Health of the Soul, without taking any thing elſe. We are ſeldom liable to greater Miſtakes, than in the comparative Value of ſeveral Duties: Becauſe we do not ſubmit our Fancy and Inclinations to the Examination of impartial Reaſon: All the Uſe we make of our Reaſon is to juſtify our Inclinations. Moſt Men are content with the mere *Title* of rational Creatures. They are *born rational* Creatures; juſt as ſome are by their *Birth noble* and *honourable*, who are not over-ſolicitous to prove, by noble and honourable

honourable *Actions*, that it is *not* an *empty* SERM. IV.
Title. Men do not reflect what Duties are of *moſt Importance* upon the *whole*, and *moſt* productive of *Happineſs*; but what ſuit their own *Fancy*, or will make them moſt *beloved*. A Man, who does wrong through the *Rigour* and *Severity* of his native Temper, is univerſally deteſted: But great Allowances are made for Him, who through an Exceſs of *Good-nature* wrongs himſelf and his Family: Though he can be no Man's real *Friend*, becauſe he is every Man's *Property*. Yet, in the true Eſtimate of Things, he, who commits a Sin through the *Eaſineſs* of his Temper is *as guilty*, as he, who ſins through the *Hardneſs* of it: and we no more ought to indulge the *kindly* Propenſions of our Nature, than the *unfriendly* Paſſions, without any Check or Control from *Reaſon*. Thus again, to uſe the Words of an excellent Writer *, "Temperance, Faith and Devotion are in themſelves perhaps as laudable, as any other "Virtues. But thoſe, which make a Man "popular and beloved, are Juſtice, Charity "and munificence; and, in ſhort, all the "good Qualities that render us beneficial to

* Mr. *Addiſon*, Spectator, No. 243.

"each

SERM. IV. "each other. For which Reaſon an ex-
"travagant Man, that has nothing to re-
"commend him but a falſe Generoſity, is
"often more beloved, than a more finiſhed
"Character, that is defective in this Par-
"ticular."

Thoſe Duties, which we do purely to recommend ourſelves to God, (ſuch as beating down our Paſſions in private, praying to Him, that his *Mercy* would remove the *Guilt*, and his *Grace* the *Dominion* of our Sins from us) muſt at leaſt be as acceptable to that Being, for whoſe Sake they are done; as other more popular Virtues, with which the lower Views of recommending ourſelves to the World are too apt to mix themſelves. A Perſon comes into the World with a ſoft compaſſionate Make, ſuſceptible of each delicate Feeling, each tender Movement. It is *no Self-denial* in him to *relieve* the Miſerable: He muſt deny *himſelf* in *not* relieving them. It is well: He applauds himſelf, and all the World applauds him, for this happy Frame. But would this Man know, whether he does good through a ſolid conſiſtent Principle of Virtue, or only through a kindly Impulſe of Nature? Let him try, whether He, who is ſo willing to

reſcue

reſcue People from the Miſery of Poverty, is equally willing to reclaim them from Vice, which is the *greateſt* Miſery; whether he is as induſtrious to diſcountenance Sin, as to remove Diſtreſs? If he is not, becauſe here harſher Methods, unſuitable to the Gentleneſs of his native Temper are to be uſed; he does not purſue Virtue merely as ſuch; he only purſues his own Inclinations. SERM. IV.

Let us not then deceive ourſelves. Virtue is *Reaſon*, or (what is indeed the *higheſt* Reaſon) the Will of *God* put in Practice. Whereas the Virtues of thoſe, who are guilty of a cuſtomary Violation of any Branch of Duty, confeſſedly ſuch, are only their *own Wills*, their reſpective Inclinations, Caprice, and Humour reduced to Practice; and therefore no Virtues at all. *Mere* Taſte influences them, or an *arbitrary* Agreement of ſome Duties to their Minds, in which *Reaſon* has nothing to do, which enjoins us *equally* to *practiſe*, whatever God has *equally* commanded, whether they be poſitive or moral, ſocial or retired Duties; whether they relate to God, our Neighbour, or ourſelves. They perform ſome Inſtances of Obedience excluſive of others, not as they are more *acceptable* to *God*, but as more *palatable*

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palatable to *themſelves*: Verily they *have their Reward* in *Hand*, without any well-grounded Hopes of another in Reverſion, who thus make it their Buſineſs to pleaſe *themſelves*.

It is univerſally agreed, that in Works of Art, Architecture for Inſtance, Painting and Statuary, it is not one detached independent Part, however ornamental, which we call Beauty; it is a full Reſult and well proportioned Union of all the ſeveral Parts, which muſt have a noble and agreeable Effect upon the Whole. Thus in Life, it is not one ſingle Accompliſhment, how excellent ſoever, that conſtitutes the Beauty of a Chriſtian Life: It is the Aſſemblage of all the moral Virtues, as far as in us lies. What avails one glaring Action or two, one ſhining Quality or more, which is not of a piece with the reſt of our Conduct? It is but a purple Patch ſown upon a Garment, every where elſe deſpicably poor, and only ſerveth to upbraid, by it's ridiculous Splendor, the Homelineſs and Coarſeneſs of all the reſt. The Truth is, *ſomething* muſt be done to ſtill the Clamours of an importunate Conſcience: Men cannot be eaſy in an *intire* and avowed *Irreligion*. This puts Men

Men upon obeying God by *Halves.* Yet *whatever* may be done with this View; nothing can be *effectually* done, till *every* vicious *Habit*, that we know of, is diſcharged. For though *Imperfections* may be pardoned, and *ſingle Acts* of Sin forgiven; yet one *habitual Vice* endangers our Salvation.

SERMON

SERMON V.

The Duty of an uniform and unreſerved Obedience.

St. JAMES II. 10, 11.

Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.

For he, that ſaid, do not commit Adultery; ſaid alſo, do not kill.

IN a former Diſcourſe, having ſhewn, 1ſt the Reaſonableneſs of an unreſerved Obedience to God, and 2dly exemplified the Folly of a partial One in ſeveral Inſtances; SERM. V. Second Sermon on this Subject.

III. I now proceed thirdly to obviate Objections againſt the Duty, which the Text enjoins.

After which, I ſhall laſtly draw ſome practical Inferences from what has been laid down.

Some think themſelves excuſable for the Commiſſion of any Fault, however notorious; becauſe no Body is free from Faults: That is, becauſe the beſt of Men are ſometimes off their Guard, are liable to little Eſcapes and Inadvertencies, and are, now and then, guilty of Sins of Omiſſion; therefore they may indulge themſelves in Drunkenneſs, Debauchery, Malice, Diſhoneſty, and, what is indeed the Inlet to all other Vices, the Prophanation of the Lord's Day.

Nay they have recourſe to Scripture to patronize a wicked Life. *The juſt Man ſinneth ſeven times a Day:* A Text of their own Invention: For it occurs no where in the Bible. There are indeed theſe Words: *The juſt Man falleth ſeven Times and riſeth up again: But the Wicked ſhall fall into Miſchief.* It is not ſaid, that the Juſt falleth into *Sin* ſeven Times, much leſs that he falleth into *Sin* ſeven Times a *Day*; which is an Interpolation of their own: The genuine and obvious Meaning is, *The juſt Man falleth ſeven* or many *Times* into *Calamity*, out of which God reſcueth him. And this

this Sense is confirmed by a Parallel Passage in the Psalms, *viz. Though the Just fall, he shall not utterly be cast down: For the Lord upholdeth him with his Hand.* SERM. V.

To as little Purpose is it to alledge the Examples of several great Men in the Old Testament in Favour of Vice. For either they were known Sins, of which those Men were guilty; or they were not. If the former, then the Severity of their Repentance bore Proportion to the Enormity of their Guilt. And who would chuse to catch a dangerous Distemper; because some of a strong Constitution, after they have undergone very severe Discipline, have, with much ado, and scarce with much ado, recovered their former Health? But, if they were not known Sins, such as perhaps were Polygamy, Concubinage, &c. what is that to us, who have no Title to the same Plea in behalf of the favourite Vice, which we retain? The whole Compass of moral Duties is more distinctly revealed, and more strongly enforced to us Christians by him, *who has brought Life and Immortality to Light*; than it was to the ancient Patriarchs and Jews. And therefore to urge *them*, as Precedents for us; is just,

SERM. V. as if a Man, who ſhould ſtumble in broad Day Light, ſhould think of excuſing himſelf by ſaying, that others did it, before *the Sun aroſe with healing in his Wings.* Our bleſſed Saviour expreſsly tells us, that *John the Baptiſt was the greateſt among them, that were born of Women: But that the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven,* or under the Goſpel Diſpenſation, *was greater than he,* i. e. The leaſt Chriſtian hath greater Advantages of Knowledge; than all the Prophets or *John* the *Baptiſt* had. They, to whom God had not by an expreſs Revelation forbidden Polygamy, and Concubinage, might be in a State of invincible Ignorance as to the Unlawfulneſs of them, *&c.* And God requires no more of any Man, than he has given him Light to know, and Abilities to perform. But from us, to whom greater Degrees of Knowledge are communicated, greater Perfection is expected.

One Objection more remains to be obviated, *viz.* that it is inconſiſtent with the divine Goodneſs to conſign *any Man,* who ſtands clear of all other Vices, to future Miſery for one habitual Crime.

To

SERM. V.

To which, in the firſt Place, I anſwer, that future Miſery is the neceſſary Conſequence of one Habit of Sin; ſince one Habit of Sin diſqualifies us for the Enjoyment of Heaven. For thoſe reigning Paſſions, which are ſometimes ſtrong *in* Death, will be *ſtronger than Death*, and *crueller than the Grave*. That habitually bad Diſpoſition, which the Decays of the Body often do not *weaken*, the Diſſolution of it will not *deſtroy*. Be that one predominant bad Quality what it will, be it Malice, Pride, Luſt, Ambition; it muſt render the Poſſeſſor miſerable. The Joys of Heaven are like the Beams of Light: If they fall upon ſome Objects of a ſuitable Texture to reflect them, as upon Chryſtal for Inſtance, they brighten and beautify them: But if upon others, they are quite loſt and ſtifled; they preſent nothing to View, but one undiſtinguiſhed *Blackneſs of Darkneſs*. There muſt be ſome Correſpondence between the Objects, that are to make us happy; and the Soul, that is to be made happy by them. And as long as the Soul is defiled by one preſumptuous Sin, that has *got the Dominion over it*; heavenly Joys cannot correſpond with it. The Man is

SERM. V. unhappy *in himself*; and while he continues ſo, nothing from *without* can render him happy. For Happineſs muſt be ſeated in the inward Frame and Diſpoſition of the Mind; and, before Objects can adminiſter Pleaſure, there muſt be an antecedent Determination of the Mind to receive Pleaſure from them. There muſt be a previous Reliſh for heavenly Bliſs, which Virtue can only give.

I anſwer farther, that it is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with God's Goodneſs to puniſh habitual Sinners; that from this very Attribute we may infer the Doctrine of future Puniſhments. For, if he be a Being of infinite Goodneſs, he muſt ſupport the Cauſe of Virtue; which cannot be done, without diſcouraging Vice; as well as honouring Virtue. If he were a Being, that delighted in the Miſery of Mankind; he would give an unlimited Scope to each irregular Paſſion, without any Fear of his Diſpleaſure hereafter. For, as Vice is in it's natural Tendency productive of Miſery to the Creation; he would encourage and embolden it, by taking off all Reſtraints, and removing all Apprehenſions of ſuffering in the Life to come, in order to intro-

duce univerſal Diſorder into it. It is therefore his Goodneſs, or his Regard to the Good of the Whole, which makes him puniſh thoſe, who counteract the Good of the Whole. The better any Being is; the more he would endeavour to diſcountenance Sin, by the moſt awakening Notices of his Diſpleaſure towards the Doers of it. Men ſhould conſult their Bible for juſt Apprehenſions of the Deity: Otherwiſe, their reigning Paſſion will inſenſibly mix with their Reaſonings; and have as great a Hand in forming their Notions, as it has in conducting their Lives. We ſhall view the Deity, not as he *is* in his *own Nature*; but through the *Mirrour* of our *own* Paſſion, which will give a Tincture to, and caſt it's own Colour on, the Object, which it repreſents. Thus a Man over-run with the black Paſſions ſees the Deity, through his gloomy Temper, with all the dark Ideas of an unrelenting Judge, and repreſents him to his ſcared Imagination with all the *Pomp* and *Solemnity* of Horror; as if he were like Death, the *King of Terrors*, not the *Father of Mercies and the God of Comforts*. On the other Hand, a Perſon, whoſe Heart is open to every Gratification

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without Reſtraint, in the Fluſh of ſanguine Health, and the Flow and Gaiety of his Spirits, repreſents him as nothing, but Benevolence *in himſelf*; and requiring nothing but Benevolence *from us*; though what other Duties may be neceſſary Qualifications for Heaven, he no more knows; than he does, what the Angels are doing in Heaven. The *auguſt* Ideas of an *holy*, *great*, and *juſt Legiſlator*, are left out of the Account; and only thoſe more *pleaſing* ones of the *affectionate Parent* retained; without conſidering, that a Being, whoſe Love is directed by the Nature and Fitneſs of Things, not by Caprice and Humour, cannot love any Being farther, than it is lovely in itſelf; that a Being of infinite Goodneſs can take no Complacency in a Perſon, who is not, in ſome Degree, Good; that to *reward Sin* would be as contrary to Reaſon, as to *puniſh Innocence*. Both ſhould conſider, that the divine *moral* Attributes are nothing, but the divine *Reaſon* under *ſeveral Denominations*; pure unallayed Reaſon, without any Thing capricious, arbitrary, or unjuſt in his Nature; and, on the other Hand, without any Softneſs, Tenderneſs, and Indulgence, which are ſo many beautiful

beautiful Weakneſſes in *our* Nature, but muſt be entirely removed from the *Divine*. Both ſhould ſtudy to make themſelves, as far as they can, like God; inſtead of repreſenting God, without any Warrant from Scripture, like themſelves. And all of us ſhould make it our Buſineſs to adjuſt our Practice to the Terms of the Goſpel; and not fooliſhly imagine, that God will abate of his Terms, or adjuſt them to our Practice. How vain is it to expect that he will ſoften and relax the Conditions of our Acceptance for *our* Sakes, who would not conform to them both for our own and *his?*

Indeed no other Scheme of Salvation could have been propoſed more advantageous to Mankind. Had the Deity publiſhed an Act of Indemnity to Mankind in general without any Amendment of Life; this would have been to have left Virtue defenceleſs, and Vice triumphant: Had he on the other Hand reſolved to conſign all Sinners to Miſery hereafter, notwithſtanding their Repentance; this would have rendered Mankind, when they had once ſinned, for ever after deſperate. Had he, in the third Place, been graciouſly pleaſed

to

SERM. V. to pardon Mankind for any *one* habitual Sin, provided they did not give a Looſe to their Paſſions in any *other* Point; this would have introduced a ſtrange Scene of Licentiouſneſs and Diſorder. One Perſon would have ſingled out Pride as moſt agreeable to his Nature; a ſecond Drunkenneſs or Malice; a third Diſhoneſty, and Breach of Truſt; a fourth Uncleanneſs, and ſo on. And thus every Vice would have been practiſed even under the Sanction of *his* Authority, who is too *pure* to behold Iniquity with *Pleaſure*; and too *juſt* to let it paſs with *Impunity*. A fourth Scheme there yet remained, the wiſeſt Expedient to manifeſt at once God's Hatred to Sin, and his Mercy to the Sinner, *viz.* to forgive every Sin, through the Merits of our Saviour, upon a thorough Change of Life: But yet, leſt Men ſhould *continue in Sin, that Grace may abound*, to repreſent the extreme Folly of perſevering in Sin, through the Hopes of repenting ſome Time or other; which is as abſurd, as if a Man ſhould through Careleſſneſs ſuffer himſelf to be ſhipwrecked, and then depend upon a Plank to bring him ſecurely to Shore.

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And now what colourable Plea remains for that one Vice, which ſo *eaſily beſets us?* If we only forego *thoſe* Crimes, for which we have *no* Inclination; *what do we more than others?* Do not even *Publicans and Sinners the ſame?* But to abſtain from Sins, to which we have a ſtrong inbred Propenſion, to combat each inordinate Affection, *that wars againſt the* Soul, and to reſiſt there, where there is a ſtrong Conflict between Nature and Grace; this is the *only deciſive* Proof of our Obedience to God. For the reigning Paſſion has much the ſame Influence over us, that *Herodias* ſeemed to have over *Herod* the *Tetrarch.* It ſhall not *intirely* reſtrain us from hearkening to the Voice of Reaſon in Points *unintereſting*; no more than ſhe did from hearing *John* the *Baptiſt:* nay, it ſhall permit us to *do many* Things upon *it's* Perſuaſion, juſt as *Herod* did upon *his.* The Conflict between them is, when Reaſon perſuades us to *put* that irregular Paſſion *away*, which *it is not lawful for* us *to have*, and to give it a Bill of *Divorce:* And then Reaſon is too often foiled and cruſhed. *Some Pleaſures* may be *ſo enchanting* either by the Power of Cuſtom, or the innate Diſpoſitions

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Diſpoſitions of our Nature; that there can be only *one greater* Pleaſure, which is to renounce them by the Force of a commanding Reaſon. For there is a Pleaſure in *being* thoroughly Good and *doing Good*, which none, but thoſe, that are thoroughly Good, can know; and thoſe, that are not ſo, will ſcarce believe.

IV. I now proceed to my fourth general Head, which is, to lay down ſome practical Inferences.

1*ſt*, From hence we may infer, how neceſſary it is we ſhould ſtudy the Scriptures, and there inform ourſelves, what the Will of our Maker is; otherwiſe, we ſhall dignify with the Name of Reaſon, whatever our craving Inclination warmly pleads for. For Reaſon, like a *weak Monarch*, ſets it's *Hand*, and gives it's *Stamp* to thoſe Things, which it's *favourite* Paſſion ſtrongly recommends, and ſees Things only, as it is pleaſed to repreſent them. Self-Partiality will incline us to think, that thoſe Virtues, which we cultivate and are fond of, are Duties of the utmoſt Importance; but thoſe, which we neglect, are of little Conſequence, or none at all. It

is

is the Indication of a ſelf-conceited Fool to imagine, that Heaven and he are ſurely of a Mind; unleſs, where Heaven has declared it's Mind by ſome authentic Revelation. A wiſe and modeſt Man will reflect, that *God's Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as ours. For, as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, ſo are his Thoughts than ours*, &c. and conſequently he will be glad of any Light from above to direct his Steps, and *guide his Feet into the Way of Peace.* The Deſign of thoſe, who would undermine Chriſtianity, is plainly this: They are for carving out a Religion for themſelves, inſtead of leaving that Work to a Being of unerring Wiſdom: The Conſequence of which is; that they always take up with a maimed and defective Morality, inſtead of a fixed determinate Scheme of Duties, complete in all it's Parts, and conſiſtent upon the Whole. They are for contriving a Religion, that may ſet eaſy upon them, ſuited rather to their own vicious Reliſh of Things; than to the genuine Standard of uncorrupted Reaſon. They are for *doing what ſeemeth good in their own* ſhort-ſighted *Eyes*, dimmed by Paſſion; in lieu of acquieſcing

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in the Will of that Being, who *ſeeth not, as Man ſeeth*. If that Precept of Scripture, which confineth the Gratification of a certain importunate Appetite within the Bounds of Wedlock, were adopted into their Scheme, *viz. Marriage is honourable among all Men, and a Bed undefiled; but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge*; it would very much thin the Number of their Proſelytes: But they, apprehenſive of this Conſequence, inculcate a far more palatable Doctrine, *viz.* the unreſtrained Indulgence of that Paſſion without the Confinement of one to one: A Doctrine, however, that is contrary to thoſe very Laws of Nature, for which they pretend ſo high a Regard in Oppoſition to Revelation. For *that* is confeſſedly contrary to the Laws of Nature, which, if *univerſally* practiſed, would interfere with the *general* Peace and *Happineſs* of Mankind. In Caſes, where *one* has as much Right to gratify himſelf, as *another*; whatever would be big with Evils, and productive of Miſery, if *all* Men were to do it; cannot, for that very Reaſon, be lawful to *any* Man: Becauſe any Man by ſo doing contributes *his* Share to the Introduction of that Miſery and Diſorder. But

if

if all Men were to think it lawful, and SERM. V.
conſequently to act, as if they thought it lawful, to tranſgreſs the Rules of Chaſtity, even where there is no Violation of the nuptial Bed; what would be the Conſequence of this univerſal Revolt? It would make the whole World one wide Scene of Debauchery and Brutality let looſe; the very Reverſe of Heaven in every Point but one; that, by diſcouraging an Inſtitution, which every wiſe State has encouraged as neceſſary to it's Welfare, there would be ſeldom or never any ſuch Thing, as *marrying, or being given in Marriage*. I therefore conclude, that notwithſtanding the ill-bred and brutal *Talk* of Libertines, than which nothing can be *more* brutal except it be their *Actions*; Fornication is a Crime: Becauſe it is to *do* that, which can never be for the Good of the World, that it ſhould be *univerſally* done: It being impoſſible, that any *particular* Practice ſhould be *warrantable*, which, if it became *general*, would be introductive of *Diſorder* and Confuſion.

Hence we may ſecondly learn, that a lame partial Obedience, inſtead of an entire univerſal Righteouſneſs, is what we ought moſt

to

SERM. V. to guard againſt. The Majority of Mankind will never be thorough-paced determined Infidels: The great Danger is, that they will be only *almoſt* Chriſtians, without being *altogether* ſo. To throw off *all* Obedience to God, is too preſumptuous; but to obey him by *Halves*, carries a *Form of Godlineſs, without the Power thereof.* It is true, ſeveral Books have appeared, that have, without Diſguiſe, attacked the Chriſtian Religion: But what Reception have they met with? Why, they put one in Mind of thoſe Bodies, which ſometimes make their Appearance on the Theatre of Nature. No Body knew, from what Quarter they came; and in a little Time no Body knew, whither they were gone: They ſerved for a while to puzzle the Learned, and make the Ignorant wonder. They alarmed Mankind, and drew their Attention far more than thoſe great Luminaries which move conſtantly above, and diſpenſe a regular and beneficial Light: But then they ſoon diſappear and are no more ſeen. Whereas the received Truths of the Chriſtian Religion, like the great Lights of Heaven, ſtill ſhine on with undiminiſhed Luſtre; and though they may be ſome-

times eclipſed, and oftner overcaſt, yet break out again with triumphant Brightneſs. What is become of all thoſe poiſonous Books, that were written about the Cloſe of the laſt Century, nay of ſome of a much later Date? Moſt of them, if not all, exploded and forgotten: *The Memorial of* ſeveral of them *is periſhed with them.* Little Writers compoſe Books apace: For Naturaliſts obſerve, that the leſs the Inſect is; the oftner it lays, and the faſter it propagates: But then their Brood is very ſhort lived. Whereas Chriſtianity, ever attacked and ever victorious, ſtill ſtands its Ground; and will do ſo, as long as unbiaſſed Senſe, a juſt Way of Thinking, and a Regard for Virtue ſhall continue in this Nation. Chriſtianity, which has weathered out the Storm of ten long Perſecutions, is not to be born down by all the deliberate reaſoning Malice of it's open Adverſaries. Thoſe are moſt to be dreaded, who, being not declared Enemies to Chriſtianity, endeavour to find out eaſier Ways of going to Heaven, and to expound away the Senſe of Scripture, when it interferes with any darling Notion.

What we are at preſent to be moſt apprehenſive of, is an Indifference to Reli-

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gion; a Vice ſometimes more incurable, than open and flagrant Profaneneſs. Becauſe there is a Principle of Religion in ſome Meaſure interwoven in our Nature: The Fear of an inviſible Being will be working in us to the laſt, and more at laſt than ever, which will not ſuffer us to be intirely at Reſt, while we continue in a profeſſed Diſobedience to our Maker. Men of a liberal Education can never go wholly into ſenſual Pleaſure; They are not Brutes enough to plunge themſelves into the loweſt Sink of Vice and Profaneneſs. Their great Danger is, that they ſhould reſt in mere *plauſible Forms*, a ſmooth *Surface* without any *Depth* or *Solidity*; like thoſe Things, to which we gave a *fine Poliſh* and a *beautiful Gloſs*, while what is *within* is untouched: that their *Religion* ſhould be, like ſome People's *Civility*, merely *ſuperficial*, a kind of *religious good Breeding*, in which the *Heart* is [illegible] all intereſted. They will not fall into a [illegible]*al* and notorious Neglect of God's Worſhip; for that would be to declare by their Actions, they thought there was *no* God to be *worſhipped*. But they ſhould conſider, that if they only, *now* and *then*, *occaſionally* and *accidentally* worſhip

worſhip him, this is in Effect to declare, SERM. V. that it is a *mere Accident* or *Chance* Thing, whether he is to be worſhipped by them, or not.

To inſtance in other Matters, where a half-Religion, or half-Morality prevails. Men may, through the Advantages of a good Education, be ſhocked at any Inſtances of *Cruelty*, *Savageneſs*, and *Murder*, who yet live and die in an *Habit* of taking up *unjuſt Suſpicions*, and paſſing a *raſh precipitate* Judgment upon their Neighbours. And yet this is that very Diſpoſition of Heart, from which Murder proceeds: For *he, that hateth his Brother, is a Murderer* in his Heart, though he may not be guilty of the outward Act. If we really loved our Neighbour; we ſhould at leaſt *wiſh*, that he was a good Man, and what we *wiſh* to be true, we are very apt to *believe* to be ſo. What is the Reaſon we cannot bear to [illegible]made the Subject of Scorn, Ridicule, and Contempt? It is becauſe we truly love ourſelves: And, if we loved *our Neighbour as ourſelves*; we ſhould therefore never make him a ſtanding Mark of our ſcornful Cenſures, and ſpiteful Raillery. Thus again, in Matters of Juſtice,

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we would not, for all the World, be guilty of Robbery and Theft: But do we, none of us, withhold from others, what they have an *equitable* Claim to; though they have no ſtrict *legal* Demand? Do we make it the Rule of our Behaviour in all Caſes to do by them, as we ſhould think it reaſonable they ſhould do to us; were we in their Circumſtances, and they in ours? Are we very careful not to prejudice any Perſon directly or indirectly in his Circumſtances or Reputation? When we have to do with any Perſon, do we invert the Caſe, and conſider his Affair, as if it were our own; and our own, as if it were his? When Things concern ourſelves, they lie too near and cloſe to the diſcerning Faculty to be ſeen juſtly by it: We muſt therefore change the Point of View, and repreſent them as done by others, to ſee them at a due Diſtance, and in their proper Dimenſions. If People were to act by this Standard, the World would be quite another Thing. In a Word, there are many who do not avoid the *Sins* of *Uncharitableneſs* and *Injuſtice*; They only avoid what is *flagrant*, *glaring*, and *notorious* in thoſe Sins. Yet thoſe, who ſin within

ſuch

ſuch Bounds, as not to make themſelves ſcandalous, are the ſeldomeſt reclaimed. For the Extravagancies of Vice muſt have an End, and the *Overflowings* of Ungodlineſs, like all other Overflowings, ſpend themſelves, and are no more: But when Wickedneſs flows on in a *regular Channel*, and within ſome Bounds; it's Courſe is more laſting, and it's Tenour uninterrupted.

It is deplorable to reflect, that the very *loweſt* Part of the World (great Numbers of the loweſt) *lieth in Wickedneſs:* It is ſunk and immerſed in Corruption of all Kinds, Brutality, Swearing, Lying, *&c.* The *higheſt* Part of the World is barren and unfruitful: I ſpeak not of *All*; I know there are many Exceptions, heartily wiſhing there were more. Virtue and Religion ſeem to have fixed their chief Seat among the *midling* Part of Mankind, or thoſe that are not far above, or much below, that Situation. And yet here are there not many, who, if they ſhould act in their temporal Affairs as they do in thoſe of much greater Importance, their ſpiritual Concerns; would be reputed Fools? A Perſon, who ſhould think his great Neighbour or his King mightier than his Maker, would be reckon-

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ed, and undoubtedly is, a ſtupid Idiot: But, why is he not reckoned ſo too, who is more induſtrious to pay Homage and recommend himſelf to the Great, than to cultivate the Favour of his Maker? Or where is the Difference, whether I do not know the real Value of Things and Perſons; or do not proportion my Regard to their real intrinſic Value? Again, a Man who ſhould chooſe a glittering Ornament, that would pleaſe his Fancy for a while, before a great Eſtate, that would make him eaſy for Life, would be thought a Madman. But does he not, in the true Eſtimate of Things, act more madly and irrationally, who takes more Care to provide for this ſhort Life, than to prepare for that bleſſed State, which will ſoon begin, and never end? The only Reaſon I can aſſign, why he is not thought ſo, is this, that the former is a Fool *out* of the *common* Road, a *Straggler from* the *common Herd*; the latter, though a much greater, is one *in* the beaten Track of Thinking and Acting. *Singular* Follies are indeed accounted to be ſuch; but *epidemical* Follies, which have the Sanction of the Multitude, and which we ſee practiſed *every Day*, we *therefore* think no Follies at all. I queſtion, whether,

ther, the moſt abſurd Religion of all, the Popiſh, has admitted more Abſurdities into it's Belief; than we too many of us do into our Practice. SERM. V.

To conclude, If Religion is falſe, why do we do ſo *much?* If it is true, why do we not do much *more?* Why have we juſt Religion *enough* to diſturb us in our vicious Practices; which it will always do, till we either effectually diſcharge *it*, or *them?* But which of them ſhall we diſcharge? In the Caſe of preſumptuous Sin, it will be impoſſible to bring over our Reaſon thoroughly and heartily to the Side of our wicked Inclinations. For, though the *Senſibility* of our Conſcience, whereby we become uneaſy at the Commiſſion of any Crime, may be deadened by a long Perſeverance in Vice; yet the *Light* of our Conſcience, whereby we diſcern the Difference between Good and Evil, can perhaps be never totally put out. But this we may do, and this, if we are wiſe, we will do: We may, by repeated Endeavours, by Degrees, ſubdue our vicious Inclinations to our Reaſon. Perhaps you think to remedy All by repenting at laſt: Suppoſe this to be poſſible, which is often not the Caſe: Yet what is this, but

SERM V to deal with God, as you would with an Enemy, to whom, when you have held out as long as poſſible, you then ſurrender yourſelf, and make the beſt Terms you can? And can you think that your Maker will be tamely put off after ſuch a Manner? If you would *ſave your Soul alive*, it is not enough that you do not labour under a complication of Vices: One habitual Vice, one inveterate Diſtemper of Mind, will prove a *Sickneſs unto Death*; if you do not make it your Endeavour to be cured of it. Why do we not obſerve that Maxim in our Chriſtian Warfare, which *Julius Cæſar* obſerved in military Affairs, never to think any thing done, while any thing material remaineth undone, while any one beloved Vice remains unconquered? Why do we not make the Deſire of recommending ourſelves to Him, who gave us Life, the main End of our living here; all our inferior Views in Life being made ſubſervient to, and centering in this grand Deſign, like ſo many By-walks all ending in one ample ſpacious Avenue? Without this fixed and determined Deſire to pleaſe God and gain his Favour; our Lives will be but one waking Dream. For as our ſleeping Dreams are a Medley of looſe,

looſe, disjointed, incoherent Thoughts; our Lives will be a Rhapſody of looſe, fortuitous, inconſiſtent Actions, without conſidering what God, Reaſon, Eternity and our own Happineſs require of us. Why do we not put theſe Queſtions home to ourſelves? "What is the beſt End for me to drive at in "all my Doings? Will ſuch an Action be "better upon the whole for my Good, "for my eternal Good? How ſhall I wiſh "I had lived, when I come to die?" God grant us all a right Senſe of our Duty; that we may act agreeable thereto; and perſevere in acting ſo to the End of our Lives. SERM. V.



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SERMON VI.

How far an Affluence contributes to Happineſs, conſidered.

In a SERMON preached before the Univerſity of *OXFORD*, 1741.

LUKE XII. 15.

A Man's Life conſiſteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he poſſeſſeth.

IF a Man's Happineſs (for Life in this Place ſignifies Happineſs) conſiſted in Abundance; then a Man would be happy in Proportion to what he *has*: An Aſſertion, which the Compaſs of every Man's Obſervation diſproves. We find ſeveral, who have no conſiderable Advantages, either of Fortune, or Honour, or Power, contented and eaſy; and ſeveral, who poſſeſs them all, yet extremely diſcontented and miſerable. This ſhould incline SERM. VI.

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cline us to think, that Happineſs is *chiefly* ſeated *within*: That the *Mind*, as it is *well* or *ill diſpoſed*, muſt *endear* the Reliſh; or *pall* the Flavour, of every earthly Bleſſing: that we muſt enjoy *ourſelves*, before we can enjoy *any Thing elſe*.

Men *miſplace* their Diſcontent: They are very well ſatisfied with what they *are*; They are only diſſatisfied with what they *have*. Whereas the very Reverſe ought generally to take place, and the *only* Deſire which we ought to ſet *no Bounds* to, is that of *encreaſing* in *Goodneſs*. A ſlender Allotment of worldly Bleſſings will content an eaſy, modeſt, humble Frame of Mind: And no Allotment whatever, no Affluence how great ſoever, can ſatisfy an uneaſy, reſtleſs, fretful Temper, ever ſeeking Reſt and finding none, making to itſelf Diſquietudes, when it meets with none; and improving them when it does.

A *rational* Way of thinking is therefore an eſſential Ingredient of Happineſs. We muſt poſſeſs ourſelves with *juſt* Apprehenſions of Things: We wind up our Imaginations *too* high; and Things, as they are in *Nature*, will never anſwer to the gay florid Ideas, which a luxuriant *Fancy* forms

forms of them. The only Expedient therefore is to take *down* our Fancy, and bring it to the Truth of Things and the Standard of Nature. Unleſs we do this, we can never be tolerably eaſy: For our Uneaſineſs, in the *Abſence* of ſuch Things, will be proportionable to the Good which we *imagine* them to have: But our Happineſs, in the *Poſſeſſion* of them, will be only anſwerable to the Good that is *really* in them. The Conſequence of which is, that the *want* of them may make us exquiſitely *unhappy*; though the *Fruition* of them would be but a *ſlender* Addition to our *Happineſs*. Conſult then your *Reaſon*: Cool unbiaſſed Reaſon will teach you the true intrinſic Value of all the Gifts of God, itſelf the *moſt* valuable of any. Whatever you admire *beyond* the real Proportion of Good that is in it, you will ſoon diſreliſh as much: But a juſt *reaſonable* Value will be as *unchanging* as *Reaſon* itſelf: And Time, which wears off the ſpecious *gilding* of each imaginary Good, brightens and improves the *Sterling* Luſtre of real Bleſſings. An undiſciplined Imagination may ſuggeſt, "O how happy ſhould I "be, if I could compaſs ſuch a Situation

"in

SERM. VI. " in Life!" But if calm Reaſon might be ſuffered to put in it's Plea, it would anſwer, " Why juſt *as* happy as thoſe that are al- " ready in *Poſſeſſion* of it, and that is, per- " haps *not at all.*" If you place your Happineſs in moderating your Deſires, you may be happy even now: But if you place it in enlarging your Poſſeſſions, you would not be happy even then. For, however ſoon your Views are terminated in Life's *low Vale*; yet, as ſoon as you ſtood upon *higher* Ground, your *Proſpect* would be *enlarged*, and the Scene *open* upon you. As faſt as *new Streams* of Wealth flowed in, the *Channel* would *widen* to take in more.

Very remarkable are the Words of *Solomon*, *Every Man*, ſays he, *to whom God has given Riches and Wealth, and has given him Power to eat thereof, to take his Portion and to rejoice in his Labour: This is the Gift of God*, i. e. To enjoy is the Gift of God, who is the *Author* of every good *Gift*, and the *Object* of every grateful *Sentiment*. He may give a Man the *Power* to *get Wealth*, without the *Art* of *enjoying* or *becoming* it: He may give him the *Materials* of

Happineſs, without giving him *Wiſdom* to be, what it *only* can be, the *Architect* of it. For though *Fortune* (a great Fortune) may be the Reſult of undeſigning *Chance*, or a Concurrence of *lucky Incidents*; yet *Happineſs* muſt be always, more or leſs, the Product of *Deſign*, *Thought*, and Reaſon. Hence it comes to paſs, that thoſe, who are very fortunate, are not always very happy. We ſee how much a Man has, and therefore we, ſome of us, *envy* him: But we ſee not, (what is often the Caſe) how little he enjoys; and *therefore* we do not *pity* him. And yet we might ſee it too, if we did but obſerve him giving perhaps evident Proofs, that he does not *enjoy* himſelf, by his conſtant Endeavours to *forget* himſelf in Variety of Company and Diverſions, ſhifting the Scene, and hurrying from Place to Place, in ſuch a perpetual *Motion* of *Body*; that nothing can exceed it, but, what it plainly ſhews, the *Reſtleſſneſs* of his *Soul*: Nothing more irkſom to him, than being *long* at *Home*; except it be the entring into a *nearer* Home, his own *Breaſt*. Alas! Happineſs is not a ſhowy ſuperficial Thing, that plays, for a while, upon the *Imagination*: *Real* SERM. VI.

Happineſs,

SERM. VI. *Happineſs*, like *real Sorrow*, lies *deep* at the *Heart*: It is rooted in the *Ground* of the Heart: Otherwiſe it would ſoon wither away, becauſe it had *no Depth*. Noiſe, Hurry and Crowds, as they call off our Attention, may *ſuſpend* or *diſſipate* real *Happineſs* or *Sorrow*; but cannot give us a quick *Senſibility* of either.

Govern then your Inclinations and Deſires: Keep your *Heart* with all Diligence: For out of *it* are the Iſſues of *Happineſs*, as well as *Life*; of Happineſs, which depends more upon the *right inward Frame* and *Diſpoſition* of the Mind, than upon any *outward Circumſtances* of Life, be they never ſo advantageous. The World may talk loudly of, and envy you for, your Happineſs: But aſk your own Heart; "Do you feel it there? If you do, whence "that continual Succeſſion of Amuſements, "*moſt* of which are only ſo many poor "Refuges from your own Thoughts, and "*ſome* of which are only certain *Toils*, "*gilded* over with the ſpecious Name "of *Diverſions*, to make them go more "glibly down? If you do not, you are, "whatever your Circumſtances may be, "but a mere *Hypocrite* in Happineſs; you

" have the bare *Form* and *Outſide* of it, SERM. VI.
" without the *Power*, *Energy* and inward
" *Feeling* thereof: Your Happineſs is *the-*
" *atrical*, and you are not the Man *be-*
" *hind* the Scenes, whom you perſonate
" upon the *Stage* of the World. And
" indeed it is in Happineſs, as in Virtue.
" Thoſe that *are* ſubſtantially virtuous and
" happy, are not ambitious of *appearing*
" ſuch. They are *content* with *being* ſuch,
" leaving it to others to ſtudy Appearances,
" and to hang out the *gaudy Sign* of Hap-
" pineſs, where it is not to be found *with-*
" *in*, *genuine* and unadulterated."

Let us ſuppoſe that *all earthly* Bleſſings centered in one Perſon, ſo that he had nothing farther to *wiſh* in this Point; and *what* would be the Conſequence? Why there is always a certain *Liſtleſſneſs*, that attends the *Fulneſs* of *Proſperity*; as there is a certain *Reſtleſſneſs* of Mind, while our Circumſtances are *neceſſitous*. *Fierceneſs* of Deſire on the one Hand; and a *nauſeous Loathing* on the other, lye often ſo near the one to the other; that it is but the thin Partition of a Moment, it is but an inviſible Line, that keeps them aſunder. Men *are* always *uneaſy*, till their Deſires are compaſſed, and

every craving Void filled up: And the Moment that every craving Void was filled up, and their Deſires compaſſed; they would ſink into a flat Indolence and a Deadneſs of Spirit.

To examine more fully into this Point,

I. I ſhall firſt range the Pleaſures under proper Heads, and conſider, how much an Affluence contributes to the Enjoyment of each. And from thence

II. I ſhall ſecondly inculcate the great Duty of Contentment.

Pleaſure may be reduced to theſe Heads, 1ſt, The Pleaſures of the Senſes; 2dly, Of the Imagination; 3dly, Of Honour and Eſteem; laſtly, Thoſe of a moral and ſpiritual Nature.

I ſhall begin with the Pleaſures of the Senſes. The rich Man may fare ſumptuouſly every Day: But to fare ſumptuouſly and to fare deliciouſly are widely different. He, that feaſts always; in reality, never feaſts at all: His Appetite is palled by the Repetition of the ſame Entertainments. Whereas hard Labour and Exerciſe makes their homely but wholſom Viands far more re-

liſhing to the Poor, than all the high-ſeaſoned Delicacies and ſumptuous Entertainments are to the Great. The clamorous Calls of an hungry Stomach are ſooner appeaſed; than the Squeamiſhneſs of a vitiated Appetite removed. The greateſt Emperors, who, after a long, tedious and laborious Flight from a victorious Enemy, have taken up with an ordinary Repaſt, have ingenuouſly owned, that a Simplicity of Diet, thus recommended by Hunger and Labour, has ſurpaſſed all the Pleaſures, they have ever before met with, from the refined and ſtudied Elegancies of a well furniſhed Table.

The Truth is: the Affluent muſt often uſe thoſe Things, *viz.* Faſting and Labour out of *Choice*, which the Poor are obliged to by *Neceſſity*: They muſt have Recourſe to Abſtinence, which is but *voluntary Faſting*, and to Exerciſe, which is but *voluntary Labour*: Or they will be Sufferers upon the whole by their great and unweildy Fortune. They will want that Chearfulneſs and even Flow of Spirits, which Temperance, ſucceſſive Induſtry and Eaſe beget, ill-exchanged for Epicuriſm and Senſuality.

Health is a temporal Bleſſing, which muſt give a Reliſh to every other: a Bleſſing, however, that we never know the full Value of, till we are deprived of it: like Objects *leſs* apparent, when too *near* the Eye; it muſt be held *off from* us, to be ſeen, to *greater Advantage*, by us. Yet this Bleſſing, the Foundation of all the reſt, is oftenеſt the Lot of an honeſt and induſtrious Competency.

The ſame Author, the Author of Nature and the Scriptures, has expreſsly enjoined, that he, *who will not work* or employ himſelf, whether he be rich or poor, *ſhall not eat*. And it is the ſame Thing, whether the Inability ariſes from want of *Food*; or want of *Health* and *Appetite*.

The next Pleaſures, that fall under Conſideration are, 2dly, thoſe of the Imagination, *viz.* Order, Beauty, Regularity. And certainly Affluence muſt be owned to be very inſtrumental in ſupplying us with Pleaſures of this Kind. It can command noble Buildings, regular Apartments, curious Pictures, Statues, Gardens, and what not?

But *what Good is there to the Owners thereof, ſaving the beholding of them with their Eyes?* And what Pleaſure therefore hath

hath the Owner more, than the Spectator, provided their Taſte be equal? The Notion of having a Property in theſe Things excluſive of others may feed the *Vanity* of the Proprietor; but does not adminiſter any *natural* Pleaſure. For all the *natural* Pleaſure reſults from a *Senſe* to *diſcern*, and a *Taſte* to be *affected* with, Beauty of this Kind. And as long as a Man of moderate Fortune keeps the Idea of Property from intruding and mixing with Delights of this Nature; he may command as much Satiſfaction, as Men of over-grown Eſtates. Nay, he may look upon the Rich as a kind of Benefactors, who have ſupplied him with a Set of pleaſing Images, and beautified the Proſpect all around him, by poliſhing the rougher Draughts of Nature with all the additional Advantages of Art. Other People may have all the *Oſtentation* of Life; but he has all the *real Entertainments* of it. He may reap all the Delight, which magnificent Buildings, coſtly Furniture, expenſive Curioſities, and fine Dreſs are by *Nature* fitted to yield: And, as to any further Delight, which reſults from *Property*; the *Pleaſure* of the Proprietor, to whom they are become familiar, depends, in a great

SERM. VI. Meaſure, upon the Reliſh of the Spectator, who applauds his judicious Fancy in the Choice of his Ornaments. His Happineſs conſiſts in comparing himſelf with others, whom he imagines leſs happy in this Reſpect: And for the ſame Reaſon *another*'s Magnificence muſt be *his* Uneaſineſs, when he compares himſelf with thoſe, who outſhine him in the elegant Accommodations of Life. Thus do Men multiply to themſelves Cauſes of Miſery, by miſplaced Affections and a vitiated Taſte: and there have been thoſe who have diſreliſhed all the ſubſtantial Enjoyments of Life, merely becauſe another has appeared adorned with a Redundancy of coſtly Ornaments, which they could not purchaſe. Where *Vanity* (eſpecially the little ſenſeleſs Vanity of Dreſs) is; there is always, it's inſeparable Attendant, *Vexation* of Spirit: So juſtly has *Solomon* joined them together. An expenſive Trifle has begot in them an undue Complacency in themſelves, mixed with a Contempt for others: Whereas the Want of it would have diſconcerted them as much as a ſolid Misfortune. So light, ſo inſignificant are the Things, which diſturb or overjoy a Mind, that calls itſelf rational. And they,

they, who can laugh at a Child for being pleaſed with, or crying becauſe it cannot have a Feather or a Gew-gaw; betray an equally childiſh Fancy in being diſcompoſed for the want of mere Play-things of another Kind; forgetful of *that*, which is to be *loved above Gold and precious Stones:* Fond of every Thing rare and uncommon, except what is the moſt valuable Rarity of all uncommon Worth, exalted Piety, and Virtue, which the Influence of their bad Example tends to make *more* rare and uncommon. Every other Diſtinction in Life which may ſet them above the vulgar Herd, glitters in their Eye: This Diſtinction only has often no Charms for them: A Diſtinction, however, of infinitely more Worth than all the reſt, which will ſet them above the reſt of the World, when all other Diſtinctions are loſt, to all Eternity. Whatever Beauty, Symmetry, and Regularity in Houſes or Gardens an Affluence may procure; there is one Symmetry and Regularity, which ought not to be forgotten, the Regularity of our Lives and Manners, the Beauty of Affections well ordered, that Harmony and Order within, without which no Order or Proportion in Things external can make us happy. SERM. VI.

The Truth is, Nature has pointed out to us a ſet of Delights, eaſy, cheap, and ſerene: But a diſtempered Imagination has ſubſtituted in their Room thoſe that are difficult of Acceſs, and unſatisfactory in the Poſſeſſion. Nature has made the moſt beautiful and pleaſing Objects the moſt common, which ſeveral overlook, merely becauſe they are ſo. They love to ſtrike into new Tracks of Pleaſure, deſpiſing thoſe, in which the Bulk of Mankind can walk as well as themſelves; and are ſo afraid of falling in with the *vulgar* Taſte, that they refine themſelves into one plainly *unnatural*. What are all the Beauties, which Genius can invent, Art exhibit, or Riches purchaſe; when put in Competition with the auguſt Spectacle of the Sun, in the vernal Seaſon, riſing in it's full Strength, gladdening the animal Creation, brightning every Object, itſelf the brighteſt: In Compariſon of which all human Glories, like the Stars, hide their diminiſhed Heads, or rather, like a ſickly Lamp, when confronted with it, have *no Glory*, by Reaſon of the *Glory which* EXCELLETH? Yet how many prefer the dull Luxury of a ſoft Bed and Eaſe, to this delightful, but alas! too early Scene?

The next Pleaſures are, thirdly, thoſe of Eſteem and Honour. We

We are apt to conſider Men, not as they are in themſelves, but as they are gilded and ſet off to Advantage by their Fortune: Whereas did we view them apart from their Circumſtances; inſtead of admiring their Greatneſs, we ſhould, ſometimes at leaſt, find Occaſion to pity their Littleneſs. It is ſurpriſing to obſerve, what a wide Diſproportion of Reſpect is paid to a Man, by rational Creatures, according as he has more or leſs of Money.

When the rich Man ſpeaketh, ſayeth the wiſe Son of *Sirach*, *every Man holdeth his Tongue, and lo! what* HE *ſayeth*, enforced with the *ſubſtantial* Eloquence of an ample Eſtate, *is extolled to the Clouds. But if a poor Man ſpeaketh, they are ready to ſay, what Fellow is this?*

Yet, to balance the Account, let it be obſerved, that as for Men of *ſuperior* Senſe, they ſee through, and heartily deſpiſe all the officious Complaiſance that is paid to their Quality, and not to their Perſon. No Honour, no Praiſe, but what comes *from* the *Heart* of the *Speaker*, can penetrate to theirs, and raiſe any delicate Senſations of Pleaſure there. They laugh at all the Embarraſſments of Great-

neſs, which like Robes of State, muſt be worn on ſome publick Occaſions, but are always heavy, cumbrous, and unweildy: They never enjoy themſelves unleſs in the milder Lights of Life, when they put them off, and are in an Undreſs, free, and diſengaged, loſing the *great* Man in the *Friend*. Their *true* Greatneſs is, that they are *ſuperior* to the *Greatneſs*, which they *poſſeſs*; and can ſee into the *Littleneſs* of it, when unaccompanied with a *liberal* Mind and *enlarged* Affections.

And, as to Men of *another* Turn, let it be obſerved, that the leaſt Neglect, nay even the Omiſſion of a Ceremony, ſhall extremely diſconcert ſome, who have been trained up with high Notions of the Deference due to them, and are big with the Sentiments of their own Dignity. Of this we have a pregnant Inſtance in *Haman*. For, after he had ſummed up all his Wealth, Honour, and Greatneſs; he concludes: *Yet all this avails mè nothing, ſo long as I ſee Mordecai ſitting at the Gate*, that is, not riſing to make his Court, and pay Homage to him. This Diſreſpect and Slight put upon him could counter-balance all his Pleaſures. To ſee another put above one, and a *Di-*

a *Diſtinction* made, where we can ſee *no* *Difference*, however *trivial* and imaginary an ill; yet gauls a Man of *high* Spirit more than ſome *ſubſtantial* Grievances do the *Meek* and *Humble*. Thoſe who are deſtitute of true Greatneſs, put one in Mind of thoſe Animals, which are diſcerned by the Help of Glaſſes: *Little* and deſpicable in *themſelves*, they muſt be *magnified* to appear conſiderable: Their Greatneſs may be properly ſaid to be extrinſic: For they would eſcape the Eye of the World, and dwindle into nothing, through a natural Medium, without ſomething *foreign* and *extrinſic* to them, to *aggrandiſe* and enlarge them.

In the Affluence of Fortune, where every Humour is indulged, every Deſire gratified without Control, there the leaſt Diſappointments, the leaſt Provocation will diſturb a Man: He can ſcarce brook any Affront, the natural Conſequence of an uninterrupted Self-Indulgence. For the more he indulges himſelf in the pleaſurable Things of Life, the leſs he will think of his not deſerving them; and the leſs he thinks of his not deſerving them, the leſs will be his Humility: till Sickneſs, Pain and Anguiſh, (no

Flatterers

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Flatterers they, who only ſpeak *ſmooth* things; they ſpeak *home* to his Boſom, and give him a *feeling* Conviction of what he is) lower his ſwelling Ideas, and reduce the exorbitant Power of his Paſſions. At that Inſtant he feels, how little they avail to eaſe an aching Heart, to ſtifle the Clamours of his Conſcience, and to ſuſpend, what they often haſten, his Doom. At that Inſtant he will look upon them in that Light, in which a great Man of a neighbouring Country did ſome extraordinary Mark of Diſtinction and Honour ſent him, as he lay on his Death-bed. "Alas! (ſays he looking coldly upon it) "this is a mighty fine "thing here in this Country: But I am "juſt bound for a Country, where it will "be of no Service to me." Nothing would be more effectual to moderate our Deſires for Things of this Nature, now we are *alive* and *well*; than ſeriouſly to reflect, in what Light they will appear to us, juſt at the *Article* of *Death*. No one can be more miſerable than the Man *of* the World, who ſeldom thought of any thing beyond it, when he is not to continue any longer *in* it. Then ſuch Sentiments as theſe, juſt at all times, will be almoſt *unavoidable* to him

him at this dread Juncture. "Alas! that "mere Trifles in compariſon of what is im- "mediately to follow, mere Shadows of the "good things to come hereafter, ſhould "ſo far engage my Thoughts; as to make "that Glory, which is of an *exceeding* and "*eternal Weight in itſelf*, have *little* or *no* "Weight at all with *me*." SERM. VI.

The laſt Pleaſures I propoſed to conſider are thoſe of a moral and ſpiritual Nature.

Theſe are indeed the moſt ſolid Satisfactions. And he is not poſſeſſed of true Wiſdom and Virtue, who does not look upon every thing elſe as beneath them. Yet theſe Pleaſures lye open to Men of every Condition in Life. It is true, a benevolent Man in low Circumſtances cannot be as beneficial to the World, as he would be, if he adorned a higher Station. But though it might be *better* for the *World* that he had an ampler Sphere of Action; yet it will be the *ſame* thing to *him* at the laſt final Adjuſtment of Rewards and Puniſhments. For he, who has (the only thing in his Power) an hearty Inclination to do more good, ſhall not loſe his Reward for want of (what was not in his Power) an Opportunity

SERM. VI. tunity to expreſs that Good-will by his Actions.

Our Virtue is at leaſt as much endangered by Opulence, which adminiſters numberleſs Incentives to Luxury, and Temptations to Inſolence, as it is by Poverty. Nay, ſome who before ſeemed to want nothing but an ample Fortune, as ſoon as they have acquired that, have from that Time wanted almoſt every Thing elſe to make them valuable. The Heat and Warmth of Proſperity has called forth thoſe Vices, which lay dormant before under the Rigour of Poverty. What Numbers have ſhortned their Days by abandoning themſelves to all the unmanly Pleaſures of a diſſolute Life; who, if they had not been born to an affluent independent State, might have made a diſtinguiſhed Figure in the World? If they had not had a Fortune to ſupport their Follies, and keep Pace with their lewd Deſires; they might have thought it neceſſary to lay in a Stock of moral and intellectual Endowments. No Wonder ſome annex the Idea of *Valuableneſs* and *Worth* to Riches, and of Deſpicableneſs and *Contempt* to Poverty: They are in the *right* to *value* themſelves upon, what

is

is the *only* valuable Thing they have, their great Wealth. SERM. VI.

After all, I am far from denying, that Riches give us larger Opportunities of doing Good: That ſeveral make this Uſe of them, and improve their *own*, by enlarging the *common* Stock of, Happineſs; their Religion, like the *Altar*, that *ſanctified* the *Gold*, *ſtamping* a *Value* upon, and dignifying, their Fortune. That their Greatneſs is not like that of old *Gothic* Buildings, an *irregular*, *encumbered* Magnificence, where there is nothing eaſy, unaffected and natural; but every Thing ſhews a ſtiff *aukward State*, and an oſtentatious *Pride:* No, it reſembles the Buildings of ancient Taſte, where all Things were *ſimple*, *juſt*, and conformable to *Truth*, and *therefore* beautiful and great; where that, which was ornamental, was alſo commodious and uſeful. But this I affirm, that unleſs we guard againſt criminal Exceſſes, Riches will, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *bring us into a Snare, and into many hurtful and fooliſh Luſts, and ſuch as drown Men in Perdition.*

The leaſt Glance of Reflection may ſerve to ſhew, that Happineſs, in a great Meaſure, conſiſts in *ſubduing* each fierce, turbulent, and

and exorbitant Paſſion; which they are not the moſt likely to do, who have the Means, in their Hands, of *gratifying* every one of them: Not to mention, that to *ſet* one's *Heart* upon the *Blandiſhments* of *Life*, (which is too often the Caſe of thoſe, whoſe Fortune can command them) is to give the *Terrors* of Death a much *keener Edge*.

But this brings me to my

II. Second general Head, which is to inculcate the great Duty of Contentment.

The firſt Reaſon for which is: that Happineſs is more equally dealt, than we, in our melancholy Hours, are apt to imagine. This is certain: that *one* Part of the World are tolerably eaſy, under ſuch Circumſtances, as would be inſupportable to the *other*. And ſome have made it a Queſtion, whether Riches do not *create* more Wants, than they *ſatisfy*. For none ſeem to be more contented, than thoſe that are intirely unacquainted with the Delicacies of Life. Thus there is even here, in many Caſes, though not in all, that regular Adjuſtment of Inequalities; that he, that has gathered much the Materials of Happineſs, *ſhould have nothing over*; and he, that has gathered

gathered little, ſhould *have no Lack.* If the Poor envy the Rich, as exempt from that Drudgery, to which they are ſubject; the Rich may ſometimes, with more Juſtice, envy the induſtrious and temperate Poor: becauſe that very Drudgery prevents that idle Swarm of reſtleſs Thoughts, that Spleen, Diſtaſte and want of Health, which high Enjoyment of Life, Luxury and Inaction ſometimes breed in them. The Labour of the Body engroſſes the Attention of the Mind, which otherwiſe *muſeth upon many Things*; and therefore hinders them from dwelling upon, and conſequently heightning *real* Misfortunes, or from forming to themſelves *imaginary* Grievances. Thus it procures them Peace of Mind, as well as Health of Body. And Happineſs, as far as attainable here below, conſiſts " in Peace of Mind, Health of Bo- " dy, and Competency of Fortune." Nay they bid as fair for a Competency, as the Rich themſelves; if not fairer. For their Labour, to which they are conſtantly inured, takes up their Thoughts, and hinders them from ſtraggling abroad, from making idle Excurſions, and creating *fantaſtic* Wants, Wants, which Nature never deſign-

ed. Now theſe *imaginary* Wants are often more vexatious to the *Opulent*, than *real* Wants are to the *Poor*. For *real* and *natural* Wants are ſoon ſupplied, a very little ſufficing Nature: Whereas the Wants of an irregular roving *Imagination* are endleſs. Hence the Opulent are ſometimes very unhappy; as they are at leiſure to frame a thouſand chimerical Deſires. And accordingly they often connect the Ideas of *Grandeur*, Retinue, coſtly Eating and Drinking, ſumptuous Villas, Statues, Paintings, with the Idea of *Happineſs:* Ideas, between which there is no *natural* Connexion; ſince many are happy without them; and ſeveral miſerable with them: Ideas, which fooliſh *Man* has put together; but which *Nature* and the wiſe *Author* of Nature ever intended to keep aſunder. They very ingeniouſly have contrived an inexhauſtible Number of Wants, which require as inexhauſtible a Fund of Wealth to ſupply them. If they *are* ſupplied, it is but *Vanity* and contributes very little to their real Enjoyments: As ſoon as the Gloſs of Novelty is worn off, they become taſteleſs and inſipid. If they *are* not ſupplied, it is a *Vexation* of Spirit, and a perpetual Source of Uneaſineſs.

neſs. They have very often ſo joined and *rivetted* together the Ideas of *Grandeur* and *Happineſs*, that they cannot retrench their Pomp and Equipage, even when their Fortune is conſiderably impaired. They muſt, through an ambitious Poverty, maintain the Shew, when the Subſtance is gone. Their Joys are pompous and *viſible*, but *falſe* and fantaſtic; their *Cares ſecret* and concealed, but *real* and ſolid. Riches, by making Pleaſures familiar to them, flatten their Reliſh for them, but give a keener Edge to every Pain which they muſt feel as well as other Men: They dull their Enjoyments, but point and quicken the Senſe of Anguiſh and Affronts.

To proceed to other Inſtances, where Happineſs is not ſo unequally diſpenſed, as we may be inclined to think: If the proſperous Villain looks down with Contempt upon the virtuous Sufferer; the virtuous Sufferer, in his Turn, may pity the proſperous Villain. For he finds within *himſelf* that genuine *Feeling* of real Worth, that *delightful Self-conſciouſneſs* of Virtue; which, whoever *ſincerely* feels, can never be, at the loweſt Ebb of Fortune, in the moſt complicated Diſtreſs, *intirely miſerable*. He

SERM. VI. can reliſh his very Being; he finds all right, at home, in his own Breaſt; his Self, his Nature, is agreeable; and God, the Author of Nature, is his Friend. But the proſperous Villain, whenever he has any Intervals, (as he muſt have Intervals,) for ſerious Reflection, muſt meet a diſtempered and wounded Spirit within him; he muſt feel a *Self-abhorrence*, a *Self-loathing*, a total *Diſreliſh* of *himſelf*: perhaps a *greater*, but certainly a more *laſting* Torment, than any *he* can *inflict*. He that, out of a Principle of *malicious* Wickedneſs, *does* ill, muſt be conſcious, he *deſerves* ill: And he, that is conſcious he *deſerves* ill, muſt expect to *meet* with his *Deſerts* from *that* Being, who *will render to every Man, according to his Deeds*.—But further,

If Men of a fine Imagination think themſelves happy, that their lively Senſe and Abilities let them into ſeveral Pleaſures, that the Vulgar are Strangers to; the Vulgar are equally happy, that their want of Delicacy ſecures them from numerous Diſtaſtes and Diſguſts, which too elegant a Taſte expoſes others to. If there are numberleſs refined Delights, which, like the delicate Strokes in Painting, are too ſubtle, exquiſite and fine

fine to affect Men of groſſer Apprehenſions; there are too numberleſs tender Solicitudes and ſoft Diſtreſſes, of which they have little or no Notion: So that the Account is exactly balanced; a quicker Senſibility of Pain and Grief bearing a juſt Proportion, in Men of finer Spirits, to that of Joy and Happineſs. If the Learned value themſelves upon their Superiority of Knowledge, the Unlearned are as content and ſometimes more ſecure in that *Ignorance*, which as much contributes to the *Repoſe* of the *Mind*, as *Darkneſs* does to *that* of the *Body*. They travel on in the plain High-road of common Senſe; whereas ſpeculative Adventurers, by ſtriking out into new and unbeaten Tracks, bewilder themſelves and their Followers. SERM. VI.

Single out, whom you pleaſe: Yet there are very few, whom we would exchange Conditions with, all Circumſtances conſidered, in every Particular. Such an one you take to be, in *general*, very happy: But, if you deſcend to *Particulars*, and take into the Account, it may be, his Age, or his Health, or his Perſon, or his Abilities, or his Temper, or his Behaviour; you would rather continue as you are, than make a

SERM. VI. *thorough* Exchange. Some few there may be, who could wiſh they were not only almoſt, but altogether ſuch, as ſome of diſtinguiſhed Virtue are: But, generally ſpeaking, whatever ſeeming Inequalities there may be, yet they are adjuſted either by the real Satisfaction, which Virtue gives, or by the falſe Pleaſures, which Conceitedneſs and Vanity affords it's Votaries.

Indeed it is impoſſible, whatever we may fancy, we ſhould wiſh ourſelves to be any other Perſon than what we really are. For it is too plain to admit of a Diſpute, that a Man, in the Exchange, propoſes ſome Advantage to *himſelf*. But what *Part* of a Man's Self could be better, if his *whole* Self was changed?

Secondly, The *Cauſe*, why Men generally *repine* at Misfortunes, is the very *Reaſon*, why they *ought* to be *thankful*. For the Cauſe, why we are ſo much diſcontented is the *Uncommonneſs* of our Misfortunes. If we were inured to Grievances, if we were acquainted with Grief, like Veterans, that have already received many Scars, we ſhould bear up, with undaunted Courage, againſt any new Aſſaults: But being unaccuſtomed to Hardſhip, being not

trained up in the School of Diſcipline and Severity; the leaſt Diſaſter unhinges our Minds: Juſt as the leaſt Cold or Inclemency of the Air affects thoſe, who have been bred up with over-much Delicacy and Tenderneſs. A thouſand Bleſſings, which we have enjoyed, paſs unregarded, merely becauſe they are become *familiar* and *common* to us. One Affliction, merely becauſe it is *uncommon*, leaves deep Traces behind it. Whereas the *chief* Senſibility or Reſentment, that it ought to raiſe in us, is that of *Gratitude* to God, for ſending thoſe Chaſtiſements ſo *rarely*. Thus, what is the Cauſe of our *Murmuring*, is, in Reality, a juſt Ground of *Thankſgiving*.

I may farther obſerve, that we lye under a Miſtake, if we imagine, they are the *great*, *weighty* and *extraordinary* Misfortunes, that *ſour* our Temper. For theſe too *rarely* befal the Generality of Mankind to beget in them an *Habit* of *Fretfulneſs*. They are the *little croſs* Incidents of Life, ſome *trivial Neglect*, that is ſhewn to us, ſome *Expreſſion dropped* in Converſation that ſeems to reflect upon us, in ſhort, *any untowardly* Affair, that in the *leaſt croſſes* our Inclinations, and does not *exactly* tally with our Deſigns,

SERM. VI. which by Degrees intirely *imbitter* the Mind, and produce an *habitual Peeviſhneſs* and *Acrimony* of *Spirit*. And for the Truth of this Reflection I appeal to the Breaſts of thoſe, who have the Unhappineſs to labour under this Diſtemper. For theſe are things, which *do* or *may befal* us *every Day*; and therefore we muſt every Day guard againſt any ill Conſequences, they may have upon our Temper; if we would preſerve a perfect Harmony within.

Another Motive for Contentment is, that the Time is coming, and muſt ſhortly be, when, if we have *retained* our *Virtue* and *Integrity*, it will ſignify little or nothing, what *elſe* we have *loſt*; but, if we have *loſt that*, it will ſignify little or nothing, what *elſe* we have *acquired* or *retained*. However *rugged* and *uneven* the *Ways* may be, yet it is ſome Comfort; that, as one * expreſſes it, they *lead* to our *Father*'s Houſe, where we ſhall want nothing.

The 4th Reaſon for Contentment is, that, could we ſee through the whole Contexture of Things, we ſhould find, we have as much Reaſon to thank God, for what

* Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* in his Letter to Mr. *Hunt*. See his Life.

he

he hath *withholden from* us, as for what he hath *granted to* us. We ſhould leave it to *Him* alone to diſpenſe his Bleſſings, as he pleaſes, who *alone* knows what will *prove* a *Bleſſing* to us, in the final Iſſue of Things. The Deity may adminiſter *not* what is *palatable*, but what is *ſalutary* to us, who have *no Health* in us: And the Longings of a diſtempered feveriſh *Soul* are no more to be gratified, than the Longings of a ſick feveriſh *Body*, without *encreaſing* our Diſtemper, *endangering* our Welfare, and making That, which might have been *cured*, a *Sickneſs unto Death*. *God*'s great Will be done without Reſerve: For if *ours* were done without Reſerve, and each exorbitant Wiſh gratified; there would need nothing elſe to make us completely miſerable. We often *owe* our *Happineſs* to *this*, that it is not in our Power to make ourſelves *unhappy*, which we ſeldom fail of doing, when it is. The ſevereſt Curſe that God inflicted upon the Iſraelites was—What? When he *curbed* and laid a Reſtraint upon their Inclinations? No: it was when he gave them up unto *their Hearts Deſire*, and let them follow their *own Imaginations*. We pray for Honours: But God may withhold

SERM. III hold us from *Honours*, becauſe he would not expoſe us to *Infamy*: Becauſe he knows, whether thoſe Virtues, which flouriſhed in the Shade, might not wither away in the Sunſhine. This *God* alone knows: what falls within the Compaſs of *our* Knowledge to abate our Fondneſs for Honour, is, that, unleſs a Man is born to Greatneſs, he ſeldom can *become great*, without being *little firſt*. I mean, he muſt ſtoop to a thouſand Littleneſſes and Baſeneſſes, which a generous Nature diſdains. To purchaſe *Honours*, he muſt part with that uncomplying *Virtue* and Integrity, for which *all* the *Honours* in the World, the *World itſelf* cannot give him an *Equivalent*. Honour and Advancement *here* are often, like Death, the *Wages* of *Sin*; in the *next* World, they will be the *Gift* of *God*, and *therefore* the Reward of Virtue. Whatever Greatneſs is founded upon any *other* Baſis; is not the Greatneſs of a *regular well-proportioned Man*; it is the Greatneſs of a *Monſter*, where there is no Grace, no Comelineſs that we ſhould deſire it; but every thing is miſſhapen, ſhocking and deformed.

We pray for Riches. But God alone knows, whether Riches would not beget in

us

as an undue Opinion of ourſelves, and lay us open to the Impreſſions of Flattery from ſervile Dependants, that would practiſe upon our Weakneſs: whether a continued Succeſſion of Gaiety, Pomp and Pleaſure might not dazzle the Mind, and divert it from attending to *the one Thing needful*, the Purſuit of eternal Happineſs by the Practice of Piety and Virtue; till we became, like the Soil, from whence our Riches were firſt dug out, unfruitful and barren. Add to this; that the ſame Wealth, which ſits *eaſy* upon Perſons bred up in *high* Life, would be an *aukward Incumbrance* to Men exalted on a ſudden from a *low* Condition. So much Reaſon is there for that Prayer of the Philoſopher. "O God, avert from us, "whatever is evil, though we do pray for "it: and grant us, whatever is good, "though we do not pray for it." Or, in the comprehenſive Words of our bleſſed Saviour, *Deliver us from Evil*; from Evil in *general*, without ſpecifying or *particularizing* what is Evil; but leaving it to Him, whoſe unerring Wiſdom can only determine in moſt Caſes, what is evil for us; and whoſe unbounded Goodneſs will grant, whatever is good to us, upon our ſerious, conſtant

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conſtant and affectionate Prayers to Him. We ſhould avoid all *Particularities* in Prayer. We may pray indeed for ſpiritual Bleſſings and eternal Happineſs without Reſerve. But we ought to pray for temporal Bleſſings under certain Reſtrictions, for juſt *as much* Fortune and Health, as is convenient for us, upon the whole of Things, ſubmitting ourſelves wholly to his *holy* Will and Pleaſure, *Who loveth us as a Father doth his own Children, and can provide for us infinitely better; whoſe Goodneſs is as extenſive as his Creation, and endleſs as his Duration.*

Here our Miſtake lyes. We ſuppoſe that Happineſs conſiſts in indulging each gay and florid Fancy, each fond and effeminate Deſire, each dear Conceit, that riſes uppermoſt in our Minds, when our Spirits run high: And if this were true, it would follow undoubtedly, that an Affluence was neceſſary to Happineſs. But God, who ſees not as we ſee, knows that Happineſs is produced by correcting our vain Imaginations, by diſciplining our Paſſions, and by bringing us to a juſt Senſe of Himſelf, of ourſelves, and every Thing elſe, that concerns us. And let us co-operate with

with the Deity: Let us look into our own Hearts. " Are there no clamorous Paſſi-
" ons there, ſuch as Luſt, Vanity, Envy,
" Covetouſneſs, Rage, which, like ſo ma-
" ny wayward Children, the more they
" are indulged, the more headſtrong and
" refractory they grow, diſtracting the Pa-
" rent Breaſt, that bred and cheriſhed
" them? If there are, we may depend
" upon it, *this* World cannot make us hap-
" py; for *Heaven* itſelf cannot make that
" Man happy, who has theſe Sources of
" Wretchedneſs within him."

You muſt form a true Reliſh of Life, juſt as you would do of Painting. You muſt not ſuffer your Eye to be captivated by gay gloſſy Colourings, by gawdy and ambitious Ornaments, however they may ſtrike and dazzle you for a while. You muſt dwell upon the more auſtere and manly Graces, which never pleaſe upon a tranſient View, but when they have *once* pleaſed you, pleaſe you for ever after *. The Al-

* Difficile dictu eſt, quænam cauſa ſit, cur ea, quæ maxime ſenſus noſtros impellunt voluptate, et ſpecie primâ acerrime commovent, ab iis celerrime faſtidio quodam et ſatietate abalienemur. Quantâ colorum pulchritudine et varietate floridiora ſunt in picturis novis pleraque, quam in veteribus? quæ tamen, etiamſi primo aſpectu nos ceperunt, diutius non delectant, cum iidem nos in antiquis tabulis illo ipſo horrido obſoletoque teneamur. Cicero de Oratore, Lib. iii. Cap. 25.

lurements

lurements of ſenſual Pleaſure are very ſtriking, they catch the heedleſs and injudicious; but the Beauty of Holineſs does not, at the firſt Glance, invite the Eye: It hath ſomething ſevere in it; and you muſt dwell upon it, and conſider it thoroughly to be enamoured of thoſe Graces, which depend not on changeable Fancy; but are founded on Truth and a Juſtneſs of Thinking; Graces which will never pleaſe you while you are thoughtleſs, nor be diſreliſhed by you, till you become ſo. However wiſely and induſtriouſly you may purſue Wealth, Honour, or Power, you can never be ſecure *againſt* a *Diſappointment*. There is *one* Purſuit, in which you can meet with *no Diſappointment*; and *that* is the Purſuit of *Virtue*: Since every honeſt and *ſpirited Endeavour* after Virtue is Virtue, in *ſome Degree*; which, if we do not ſlacken our Endeavours, will lead on to a greater; till our Goodneſs *ſhines more and more unto a perfect Day*.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

The Reaſons, why Men act contrary to Conviction, and their ſettled Principles, aſſigned.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*, 1741.

ROMANS I. 18.

—Who holdeth the Truth in Righteouſneſs.

THE Word, that is here rendered *hold*, ſignifies in the Original to *detain*. They (the Gentiles) kept the Truth ſhut up and confined as in a Priſon, and did not let it appear abroad in their Actions. Or, as the ſame Apoſtle explains himſelf in the next Chapter, *They did not obey the Truth*, of which they had juſt Apprehenſions; *but obeyed Unrighteouſneſs.*

neſs. Theſe Words, though levelled againſt thoſe Heathens, who, *when they knew God did not glorify him*, as ſuch, yet are applicable to too many Chriſtians: And it ſhall be my Buſineſs in the following Diſcourſe,

I. To enquire how it comes to paſs, that ſeveral act contrary to Conviction, or *hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs.*

IIdly, Having pointed out the Cauſes, to apply proper Remedies.

As to the Firſt,

The Query is, whence it proceeds, that Men, who acknowledge the great Truths of Natural and Revealed Religion, ſhould act in direct Oppoſition to them? What ſhall we ſay? That they are in Reality determined Atheiſts and Unbelievers, whatever they may pretend to be? No: Men of this Stamp are very rare. There may be indeed, and often is, a certain Degree of Unbelief, which is the Cauſe of the Inconſiſtency between Men's Profeſſion and Practice. Men may be Believers in *general*, who yet are Diſbelievers in *ſome Reſpects.* They are not thoroughly, it may be, perſuaded of the Heinouſneſs and Malignity of

of ſome Sins, or of God's Diſpleaſure againſt them: They have ſome crude indigeſted Notions, that Vice is not of ſo deſtructive and deadly Nature, nor God ſo ſtrict a Being, as repreſented in Scripture. And it is this Kind of Unbelief, which St. *Paul* charges on the Iſraelites: *So then we ſee, that they could not enter in* (into Canaan) *becauſe of Unbelief.* What Unbelief? Not Unbelief in *general* of God's Providence and their Religion: They had too many *glaring* and *repeated* Proofs of God's Preſence among them to doubt of that: It was Unbelief as to *ſome certain Points, ſo far* and no *farther*, that cauſed them to be ſtubborn and diſobedient: They did not heartily believe God's Promiſes and Threatnings, ſo as to be influenced by them. But, though this is often the Caſe, and accounts for a great deal of that Wickedneſs, which prevails among the Bulk of Mankind; yet it does not come fully up to the Point in Hand. For all the Knowledge in the World, all the *dry abſtracted Reaſonings* will ſignify little, till our *Affections* are *engaged* and *intereſted* on the Side of Virtue. And our Principles will only float uſeleſs in the Head; till the Heart, *out of which are the*

Ser. VII. *Iſſues of Life*, is touched and warmed by them. Till our Inclinations, the great Springs of Action, fall in with our Duty; we ſhall apply ourſelves to it in a cold ſpiritleſs Manner, as a mere Taſk, as the unnatural Reſult of Force and Impoſition upon us; not as the genuine Offſpring of our own ingenuous and manly Choice. Religion may exert itſelf now and then, in ſome few broken occaſional Efforts; but it will ſoon loſe it's Hold upon us, like Water-works, the Effect of Art and Conſtraint, playing, however, occaſionally, and riſing to an uncommon Height; yet ceaſing to riſe, and diſcontinuing to play upon the leaſt Obſtacle and Impediment: It is from the Fulneſs of the Heart, as from a rich and inexhauſtible Spring, that a Religion muſt proceed, which *rejoices to run it's Courſe*, which ſurmounts all Obſtacles, and bears down all Oppoſition, which breaks not out into *ſudden interrupted Guſhes*, but flows on with one *continued equal Stream*. A ſettled, animated Reſolution to ſerve God, and nothing elſe, will overlook little Difficulties, and charge through great ones. A Man of a large compaſs of Thought ſhall be able to define

the Nature, ſtate the Meaſures, and demonſtrate the Reaſonableneſs of each Virtue: In the mean Time he ſhall content himſelf with the barren Demonſtration, leaving the Practice to others. On the other Hand, an ignorant Peaſant, who knows not what a Demonſtration or Definition means, ſhall diſcharge every Duty, which the other can demonſtrate, through an affectionate Reliſh for Goodneſs, and from, what is generally the beſt Caſuiſt, an honeſt Heart. SER. VII.

The Myſtery of the whole matter ſeems to be here. It is not Truth as *ſuch*, *unintereſting* Truth, the beautiful, but uſeleſs Furniture of the Head, that determines the Will: It is Truth *endeared to the Affections*, Truth *conſidered as important*, that powerfully touches the inmoſt Springs and Movements of our Nature. It is not enough to influence the Will, that we apprehend a Thing to be *good* and *valuable* in itſelf: For ſo we may apprehend ſeveral Branches of *Science* to be, which yet ſhall not determine us to proſecute the Study of them with Ardour. To move the Will effectually, it is farther requiſite that we apprehend the Thing to be *neceſſary* to our

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well Being, and find ourſelves *uneaſy* in the Abſence of it. For *while* we are *eaſy without* it; a diſtinct Apprehenſion of the Excellency of the Thing, though it may produce a *ſupine ſpiritleſs Wiſh*, will never beget a *ſtrong* and *vigorous Deſire*: Which, by the Way, ſhews the Abſurdity of reſolving the Obligation of Morality into any thing, but the moſt affecting and intereſting Conſiderations. A *craving boiſterous Uneaſineſs*, that, conſcious of ſuperior Strength, demands to be relieved, will be always too hard for a *fine delicate Idea* concerning the Beauty of Virtue, which plays round the *Imagination*, but comes not to the *Heart*. Whereas everlaſting Miſery will have it's Terrors, and that Glory, which has an *exceeding and eternal Weight* in *itſelf*, will have it's Weight with every *wiſe Man*, who does not delude himſelf with the Hopes of an After-Repentance. Vice cannot ſtand the Teſt of ſuch a Conſideration, when brought home to our Boſoms, and preſſed powerfully upon our Hearts: It flies before it, when it appears in it's full Strength: Juſt as *when the Sun ariſeth, the Beaſts of Prey get them away, and lay them down in their Dens.* It may be then eaſily ſeen, how a

Man with all his Knowledge may go aſtray, if he does not ſeriouſly conſider Piety as an eſſential Ingredient of Happineſs; and that too, at the very Time that he is proceeding to Action. Thoſe *Truths*, and thoſe *only*, will be conſtantly *preſent* to the Mind, with which we are warmly affected; juſt as we chooſe to have thoſe *Perſons about* us, whom we cordially *love*. If then we are more warmly affected with ſomething elſe than with religious Truths; they will be often abſent, or out of the Mind: And, ſince nothing can act where it is not; the Truths, which are not preſent to the Mind upon the emergent Occaſion, will have then no more Effect, than if they had been never there at all. SER. VII.

From hence then it comes to paſs, that Men of a ſound Judgment in other Things, great Maſters of Reaſon, are yet Slaves to their Paſſions; whereas Men of much inferior Abilities have been remarkably good. For it does not require any uncommon *Reach* of *Thought* or *great Diſcernment* to underſtand, that eternal Happineſs is preferable to any ſhort-lived Pleaſure, the Favour of God to any worldly Views: All that is here required, is ſuch a *Degree*

SER. VII. of *Affection*, as may keep theſe Truths *preſent* to the Mind, not let them ſlip out of it, or lie dormant in it. And, let a Man be never ſo dull, if he keeps his Eye fixed and intent upon that grand Point, *viz.* everlaſting Bliſs; he will have Light enough to direct him to Heaven. The fewer Ideas he has; the more he may attend to the moſt noble Idea of all, that of eternal Glory; while much brighter Men, who have Variety of Objects in View to call off their Attention, may miſcarry through Supineneſs, Negligence, and Diſſipation of Thought. He, who purſues his Journey with a determinate Steadineſs, will ſooner arrive at the End of it; than a Perſon of much greater Strength, who diverts into By-Paths in Purſuit of every thing, which ſtrikes his Fancy. A very *ſlender* Share of *Senſe*, with a GREAT *deal* of *Watchfulneſs*, Circumſpection, and a *pious Jealouſy* over ourſelves, will go much further; than *all* the *habitual Knowledge* in the World without an actual *Application* of what we do know. The laſt is but the Wiſdom of the *Head*: *One Grain* of the Wiſdom of the *Heart* is worth it all. A vigorous and awakened Attention

Attention to our religious Notices of Things, ſuch an undiſturbed Preſence of Mind, as to have all our good Thoughts about us in the very Article of Action, when any Temptation offers, is, in our Chriſtian Warfare; what an undiſturbed Preſence of Mind in the very Article of Danger is to a General, in another Kind of Warfare: It ſhall be of more Service to him, than a thouſand notional Theories and refined Inſtructions about the Art of War without it. In a Word, it is in every Man's Power to be remiſs and negligent; or to be attentive and conſiderate; to dwell upon Religion, Heaven, and Hell, often and long; or to diſmiſs thoſe Subjects, and ſhut out the Conſideration of them. According as we do the one or the other; not according as our Abilities are great or ſmall; we ſhall become good or bad Men. It is not want of Abilities, it is want of ſerious Conſideration, that is the Inlet to every Vice. The Things above are like the Stars, which, however great in themſelves, ſhine upon us, by Reaſon of their Diſtance, with a feeble Light and diminiſhed Glory: But Conſideration is a Teleſcope, which brings them home to us, gives them their proper

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Ser. VII. Dimenſions and juſt Magnitude, and makes us conſider, how little and deſpicable this Earth is, to which our Affections are attached, in Compariſon of thoſe numerous, great, and ſplendid Objects, which are above.

Men of ſuperior Vivacity and Wit, when they take a wrong Turn, are generally worſe than other Men: Becauſe *Wit*, conſiſting in a lively Repreſentation of Ideas aſſembled together, gives every ſenſible Object thoſe *heightening Touches*, and that *ſtriking Imagery*, which is unknown to Men of *ſlower* Apprehenſions: Wit being to ſenſible Objects, what Light is to Bodies; It does not merely ſhew them as they *are* in *themſelves*: It gives an *adventitious* Colour, which is *not* a *Property inherent* in them: It *lends* them Beauties which are *not* their *own*. It does not barely *exhibit* Things to *View*, it *brightens* and *ſheds* a *Luſtre* on what it exhibits. Their Imagination is a *ſplendid* Liar, far more apt to impoſe upon us, than a dull flat Falſifier. In a Word, a fine Imagination may be neceſſary to *raiſe* the Paſſions, either in ourſelves or others; but there is Need of a well-

well-poised Judgment to allay and moderate them.

To this may be added, that there is sometimes a certain Self-Confidence and Self-Sufficiency in Men of great Quickness and Penetration; and when this is the Case, they seldom fail to betray their own Weakness, by depending too much upon their own Strength. Whereas Men of a plain Understanding may have a certain Diffidence of themselves, which is the best Guard and Preservative against any fatal Miscarriages.

When there is a *wicked Heart*, a *good Head* only plunges Men the *deeper* in *Error* and *Vice*: Because such Men set their Faculties upon the Stretch, and therefore find out a thousand Colourings and Evasions, which escape Men less inventive and refining. There is nothing so *absurd*, but that Man may *maintain*; nothing so *wicked*, but that Man may *do*; who has provoked *God*, through an overweening *Conceit* of himself, to leave *him* to *himself*. And this is perhaps the most satisfactory Account, how it comes to pass, that Men, who do not want for Understanding in other Matters, think and act so unaccountably

Ser. VII. ably in religious Affairs. The only Wiſdom they want, is that, without which all other Wiſdom is but Folly, a Wiſdom unto Salvation.

How far this is a juſt Solution of the Difficulty, muſt be left to others to determine: Sure I am, that it is more rational than *another* Hypotheſis, the Patrons of which boldly cut the Knot, inſtead of untying it, and aſſert that no Man ever acted upon Principle. That is, a Man ſhall know (for he, who has right Principles, certainly does know) that Vice is productive of Miſery, and Virtue of Happineſs: Yet, at the Inſtant he knows this, ſhall prefer Vice before Virtue, *i. e.* Miſery before Happineſs, or ſhall will Miſery as ſuch. However abſurd this Notion is, yet it is a Maxim among them, that Virtue would be nothing, if it were not ſupported by Vanity, Self-Intereſt, *&c.* Though, why it ſhould be a Maxim among them, another Maxim of a favourite Writer of theirs gives the beſt Account, *viz. that it is with certain good Qualities, as it is with the Senſes: Thoſe who have them not, not only cannot diſcern them in other People, but cannot apprehend there ſhould be any ſuch Thing.*

Thing. But is Virtue then only a Phantom or Apparition, which is often talked of, but ſeldom or never ſeen? Is it not Reaſon or Truth put in Practice? And cannot Man, who is a *reaſonable* Creature, *act* reaſonably? Yes ſurely; or elſe it would follow, that God has given us a Principle, which we cannot exert, which is of no Uſe to us: A Suppoſition highly derogatory to his Honour, who has done nothing in vain. Whoever then affirms, that all our Actions are to be reſolved into a Principle of Vanity, Self-Intereſt, *&c.* muſt either maintain that a reaſonable Creature *cannot* act *reaſonably* or virtuouſly; or he muſt maintain, that *no* Man ever did *do*, what *every* Man both *can do*, and is *convinced* he *ought* to do. SER. VII.

To examine more particularly thoſe ſiniſter Motives, to which they would trace up our Actions, independently of our Opinions and Perſuaſions: The firſt of which is Vanity. And it is very remarkable, that a Nation moſt diſtinguiſhed for Vanity has produced thoſe Writers, who have reſolved all our ſhining Actions into that Principle. But, though *ſingle* good Actions may, and often do, proceed from a Principle of Vanity;

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nity; yet a continued *Courſe* of them muſt have for its Baſis a fixed and determined Principle of Virtue. For, if ſo fantaſtick a Principle as Vanity could be the Source of a regular uniform Practice of Goodneſs; then, where-ever Vanity was equally predominant, it would operate with equal Steadineſs; it would not break out into tranſient occaſional Acts, but produce a ſtanding and ſettled Habit of acting well; which is contrary to Experience.

A ſecond Motive, which they aſſign, is an Inclination to Pleaſure. To which I anſwer, it is not Pleaſure, as *ſuch*, *excluſive* of our *Perſuaſions*, which puts Men upon Action: It is Pleaſure *authoriſed* by a *Perſuaſion* and *Opinion*, that it is *not dangerous* ſo to do, or that the Good, which is in it, will *over-balance* the Ill: Which is plain from this: That no Man, however keen his Appetite might be, would taſte the moſt delicious Viands, the Conſequence of which he apprehended would be immediate Death. And, though ſeveral, through habitual Intemperance, *eat and drink their own Damnation*; yet it is not, becauſe they are prompted to it by Pleaſure in direct *Contradiction* to their fixed Principles

ciples and Perſuaſion; but *becauſe it is* their fixed Principle and Perſuaſion, however deluſive, that they ſhall avert the Danger of Damnation by a Repentance ſome Time or other. SER. VII.

A third Motive, which they pretend ſets Men at work independently of their Principles, is their predominant Temper and Complexion. Now, in Diſproof of this, it is obvious to obſerve, that even Men of the moſt choleric and haughty Tempers, never diſcharge their Choler, or expreſs their Haughtineſs, againſt thoſe, upon whom all their future Expectations in Life depend. What is it that lays a Reſtraint upon theſe Men, but *prudential* Notions and Conſiderations? And *religious* Notions, far more weighty in themſelves, if they were preſent to their Mind in their full Force, without any Subterfuges in Reſerve, would be at leaſt as great a Check as the other.

I wave a fourth Motive, that of Self-Intereſt; becauſe it is too plain to admit of a Diſpute, that Men have often acted without any mercenary and foreign Regards.

It is alledged further, in Defence of this Hypotheſis, that ſeveral Atheiſtical Philoſophers

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ſophers have, notwithſtanding the Badneſs of their Principles, been good moral Men; as on the other hand ſeveral very orthodox Chriſtians have led immoral Lives. As to the former. Not to mention, that a Regard to Decency and Reputation will be always a conſiderable Reſtraint upon Men of a liberal Education; that a certain *Delicacy* and *Elegance* of Thinking goes, more or leſs, along with it, which gives a *Diſreliſh* for *coarſe*, *ſordid* and *brutal* Indulgences; let it be conſidered, that Men, generally ſpeaking, have ſeldom *more* than *one* ſtrong *predominant* Vice; that the only deciſive Teſt of Goodneſs conſiſts not in abſtaining from Sins, for which we have no Reliſh, but in ſacrificing that predominant Sin, whatever it be, to the Love of Virtue. Now Men, that have ſequeſtered themſelves from the World, to meditate in Solitude and Retirement, have no ſtrong Biaſs to Intemperance, Senſuality and Diſhoneſty; Vices, that are inconſiſtent with a Life devoted to Study. The Sins that *eaſily* beſet them, are a ſplenetic Pride, Diſcontent, a Spirit of Oppoſition, and a Deſire to be diſtinguiſhed by the Singularity of their Notions. And it is as hard for them to get the better of this

this inordinate Deſire of Diſtinction; as it is for Men long practiſed in the World to conquer their Love of Pleaſure, Honour or Riches. Yet, by gratifying this dry, joyleſs, uncomfortable Pride, they ſhall do more Diſſervice to the World; than the moſt abandoned Voluptuary by a Life ſpent in the mad Sallies of Intemperance. They ſhall lead the Lives of *Hermits*, that others, without Remorſe of Conſcience, may ſpend theirs in *Debauchery:* They ſhall teach People to be wicked upon Principle, which is the moſt incurable Kind of Wickedneſs. The Moon, that glides along in Silence with a pale, ſerene and ſober Light; yet is the Cauſe of all the working and ſwelling of the Deep, is a proper Emblem of theſe Men, who, at the ſame Time, that they ſeem to be unconcerned Spectators without mixing with the World; are yet the great Occaſions, by the Principles which they propagate, of the Diſorder and Vice, which prevails in it.

As for the ſecond Inſtance brought to prove, that Men never act upon Principle *viz.* of Chriſtians, ſound in their Principles, yet leading immoral Lives; I ſhall anſwer one Paradox by another, *viz.* that no Man, whether

Ser. VII. whether Chriſtian or Heathen, however he might act contrary to his preſent *Profeſſion*, did ever act contrary to his preſent *Perſuaſion* or *Principle* of Acting. For can a Man *chooſe* that, which he is *perſuaded* is uneligible? Here then the Difficulty lyes. It is plain on the one Side, that Good, either real or apparent, is the ſole Object of our Love, that we cannot will Evil, as Evil; yet, on the other Side, we know, Luſt, Malice, *&c.* to be Evils. It is certain, the Underſtanding does judge theſe to be Vices; and it is as certain the Will muſt follow the laſt Judgment of the Underſtanding. To take off the Force of this Objection, we muſt diſtinguiſh between our *general habitual* Notices of Good and Evil, which are the Product of a Mind at Eaſe, in the full undiſturbed Poſſeſſion of itſelf, when it is a ſtill calm Mirrour, that gives true and impartial Images of Things; and the *particular actual* Judgments we make juſt upon the Point of Action, when perhaps Paſſion has got the Aſcendant, the confuſed Senſations of a Dream, which vaniſh, when a Man awakes or comes to himſelf, to a ſerious, cool and recollected State of Mind.

When

When a Man then acts contrary to his ſtanding general Perſuaſion; Things, it may be, appear to him in a different Light, at that Criſis, from what they do at other Times, through the Prevalency of ſome Paſſion: Not that the Paſſions, however violent, intirely bereave the Soul of *all* Senſe of Right and Wrong: No, they leave a *confuſed* and *indiſtinct* Senſe of them, which is of little or no Service. For our Knowledge keeps Pace with our Ideas, and our Practice with our Knowledge: If therefore the Idea of an *Injury* juſt received be *freſh*, *lively* and *ſtrong*, but the Idea of our *Duty*, at that Juncture, *faint*, *dim* and *indiſtinct*; the Conſequence is, I ſuppoſe, very obvious. Paſſion comes upon a Perſon, *like an armed Man*, and breaks through all the Bonds of Decency, Reaſon and Religion; juſt as, in the Scripture Language, *a Thread of Tow is ſnapped aſunder, when it toucheth the Fire*: It precipitates him to Revenge, *as the Horſe ruſhes to the Battle*, without conſidering the Conſequences. That he ought to revenge himſelf, was not perhaps his Judgment ſome Hours ago; nor may it be ſome Hours hence; but it is his Determination at preſent, and according to SER. VII.

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that he acts. It is plain, there is a Difference between his *general* Sentiments and Principles, and his preſent *actual* Perſuaſion; becauſe he condemns in his *cooler* Hours, what he did in the *Heat* and *Ferment* of his Blood, when a violent Paſſion, like a boiſterous Wind, put out the Light, that ſhould *guide his Feet in the Way of Peace*. The Paſſions in general, when they are uppermoſt, give a wrong Tincture to, and diſcolour the genuine Evidence of Things. Obſerve a Man under a deep and rivetted Affliction of Mind: While the ſettled Gloom of Melancholy laſts; as if the World *without* were, what ſome have maintained, a chimerical *Scene within*; the *black* Ideas *within* ſhall darken the Face of Nature, and repreſent every Thing *black about* him. The Sun, which *riſes on the evil and the good*, ſhines not to *him alone*; *it* has no luſtre, the *Spring no Verdure* for him: All, All, is one univerſal Blank. Whatever Beams of Comfort you attempt to let in upon him, his *dark Mind*, which *refuſes to be comforted*, *ſtifles* them all; juſt as *black Bodies abſorb* and *ſuffocate* all the Rays of Light. All violent Affections have the ſame Effect: It is their Nature

to

to be never in the Wrong; they justify themselves, and misrepresent every Thing else. SER. VII.

Every Man, like the Prophet *Jonah*, for the Time that he is angry, thinks he *does well to be angry*. And so in every other Case, when he is passionately affected to any Thing, he *occasionally* judges it right to be so; though he did not think so in his cooler Hours before, nor may think so afterwards, when the Temptation is withdrawn.

It is a good Rule therefore, which *Cartesius* lays down for the Conduct of the Passions, *viz.* that a Man should forearm himself with this settled Persuasion, that, during the Commotion of his Blood and Spirits, whatever is offered to his Imagination in favour of his predominant Passion, tends only to deceive his Reason. Nor must it be omitted here, that what an Excess of Passion is to some Men for a short Space of Time, a native Impetuosity of Temper is to others during the main Tenor of their Lives. They are too hasty and impatient to suspend their Judgment, till they have considered the whole of the Case. In Action as well as Theory, they see a

Ser. VII. little, preſume a great deal, and ſo ſpring forward to a Concluſion. The ſame Redundancy of Fire, Spirit and Energy, which raiſes them above the common Level in ſome Things, ſinks them as much beneath it in others. As Men of a *cold intrenched* Temper are moſt liable to Sins of Omiſſion; Men of too great a *Fulneſs* of Spirits are continually precipitated into Sins of Commiſſion.

But this is not the worſt of the Caſe: though a boiſterous Paſſion may be, for a while, more powerful than Reaſon, yet the latter, if duly exerted, will, in Proceſs of Time, weaken and reduce it's exorbitant Power: Juſt as, though Men in a Delirium and Frenzy may be ſtronger than thoſe in their ſober Senſes, yet the latter ſeldom fail of ſubduing and binding the former. The Misfortune is, ſome, who are not unapprized of their Duty, go on in a calm Courſe of ſinning, with a full Command over themſelves. When theſe, who are hurried away by no violent Impulſe, act contrary to their ſettled Principles, their Caſe is this:

Though they know the Nature of *Virtue* and *Vice* in *general*, they know not *themſelves*; they are either ignorant, that they

they are guilty of a Breach of their Duty, for want of examining into the Springs of their Actions; or they explain their Duty away. SER. VII.

For Men's Heads are fruitful of Evaſions to reconcile their Duty and their Intereſt, when they come in Competition: and Arguments, ſuch as they are, are never wanting to make that appear *reaſonable*, which is *agreeable* or *profitable* to us; except where the Caſe is very *glaring* and *notorious*. He, that earneſtly *wiſhes* that a Thing *was* lawful, has *half conſented*, that it *is* ſo. Diſhoneſty has already crept into his *Heart*, and the Tranſition from thence to the *Head* is very quick and ſudden. Injudicious Obſervers haſtily conclude, that ſuch a Man only puts on the Appearance of Religion to deceive the World, and is no better than an Atheiſt in Diſguiſe: But thoſe who underſtand the various Windings and Turnings of Self-love and the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, know there are ſeveral Salvos, by which Men quiet their own Conſciences, and deceive themſelves. "Things were "ſo circumſtanced, that what is a Sin in "general, was not ſo to them, in this par-"ticular Caſe, all Things conſidered. The "good Conſequences, they apprehend or

Ser. VII. " rather flatter themſelves, will over-ba-
" lance the Bad: and therefore they did,
" what appeared to them beſt upon the
" whole."

I queſtion, whether Men are ſo often guilty of Diſhoneſty in their Dealings between *Man* and *Man*, as they are of an *inward* Diſhoneſty and unfair Dealing in their Intercourſe with *themſelves*. They are very artful in palliating their Vices and caſting in Shades the Deformity of them. Vices, however the ſame in *general* and in the *groſs*, are yet diverſified, as to ſome *Particulars*, in each Individual. And, becauſe their Vice has not the ſame Symptoms, nor is ſo ſtrongly marked, as that of another Man; they, through Self-partiality, are apt to conclude it to be no Vice at all. We are oftner deceived by our Affections, the greateſt Sophiſters of all, than by any other Sophiſtry whatſoever. A Man may know Pride in *general* to be a Vice, and yet be ignorant *he* is proud: Becauſe to conſider the Nature of Pride and Humility in *general* does not at all *alarm* the Paſſions: It is *ſo far* mere *ſpeculative* Knowledge, till we *apply*, what we know in general, to ourſelves in *particular*. To form

clear

clear and diſtinct Notions of *Virtue* and *Vice* in *general* is an *eaſy* Matter: But to have clear and diſtinct Notions of ourſelves, whether *we* are guilty of *ſuch* a *Vice* or endued with ſuch a *Virtue*, is a Work of ſome Difficulty: Becauſe, as to the *former* Caſe, there are *no Paſſions* to obſtruct or clog the Mind in the Purſuit of *ſuch* Truths any more, than any other *abſtract* and *unintereſting* Truth; but, in the *latter* Caſe, when we would bring Things home to our *own Boſom*, our *Self-love* is immediately up in Arms, and *darkens* Things *faſter*, than our *Reaſon* can *clear* them up. Hence *our* Pride, whatever that of others be, is a Greatneſs of Spirit, Elevation of Soul, and a juſt Senſe of our Worth; *our* Covetouſneſs is Frugality. Vice always puts on ſome advantageous Dreſs; and appears in ſome ſpecious Diſguiſe to endear itſelf to our Choice. We ſee ſcarce *any* Thing, as it is, in a full and juſt Light, in *this* World; and *ourſelves leaſt* of all: It is reſerved for *another* World, that Vice, like *Deſtruction*, *ſhould have no Covering*, and Virtue, like it's great Author, *appear in perfect Beauty*. Add to this, that, what is the Cauſe of moſt Errors in Speculation, is ſo likewiſe SER. VII.

Ser. VII. in Matters of Practice, *viz.* that many are *Half-thinkers:* They do not conſider Things *throughout:* They do not give Reaſon it's *due Extent* and *general* Influence over their Actions. They take *Reaſon* for their Guide to ſuch a *Point* or *ſo far*—and then *Cuſtom* and the received *Practice* of the *World* uſurp it's Place. Otherwiſe, it would be impoſſible, that Men of a ſerious religious Turn, in moſt Points, ſhould act ſo irrationally, as they do in others, particularly as to the reigning Vices of Converſation. The Truth is, Men ſeldom *reaſon* about Things *common* and *familiar* and what occurs *every* Day: What is uncommon, indeed, ſtrikes more forcibly upon them, engages their Attention, and puts them upon Thinking.

But if our Vices will admit of no flattering Diſguiſe, there is ſtill another Reſource left, there is an After-game to play, we think of ſecuring our Salvation by a future Repentance. This is the Caſe of *deliberate*, *determined*, preſumptuous Sinners; Men, who *wilfully ſtep aſide out* of the Path of Innocence and Virtue, upon a *Preſumption* of being able to *return into it* again, after they have compaſſed ſuch a Situation in Life. But alas! *Veſtigia pauca retrorſum.*

Thus

Thus have I ſhewn how Men come to act contrary to their *ſtanding* Perſuaſion, and Principles: For they never act contrary to their *preſent* Perſuaſion: No, not even in the laſt Caſe. For theſe Men do not will Evil, as Evil; but think they have found out an artful Expedient to *enjoy* all the *Good* that is in any Object, and yet *fence off* all the *Evil* by a timely Repentance. This is their Perſuaſion, however erroneous. SER. VII.

It does not follow, however, from what is here laid down, that Men do not act upon ſettled religious Principles, or that ſuch Principles are uſeleſs. For even, where ſome irregular Paſſion is predominant, they are very far from being ſo. They will make a Man even then, like *Herod*, do *many* things in Conformity to them, though not *every* thing, that is neceſſary to Salvation. And, though they are not *ſtrong enough* to *reinſtate* Religion intirely on the *Throne*; they ſhall not be *ſo weak* either, but they ſhall make Vice *uneaſy* in it's *uſurped Sovereignty*. They will be a conſiderable Check upon him, till they are eraſed. Thus a Man, who is guilty of ſome baſe and unmanly Compliances for the Sake of Preferment, would perhaps reject with

Ser. VII. with Horrour any Propoſal, that was viſibly deſtructive of the Conſtitution; nor would he, whatever advantageous Overtures were made him, be induced to deny his Saviour, or write againſt Chriſtianity. A Perſon who, in ſome little Matters, overreaches his Neighbour, would be alarmed at the Thought of adding Perjury to his Fraud, and murdering him in cold Blood: And ſo in ſeveral Inſtances. A reſolved, ſober and conſiderate Wickedneſs, which is founded upon bad Principles, is far more dreadful; than all the Irregularities and ſhort-lived Exceſſes, into which a Man not unacquainted with the wiſeſt Reaſons for Virtue and the ſtrongeſt Motives to it may be ſometimes betrayed. For Vice cannot make any conſiderable Progreſs and go it's utmoſt Lengths, as long as good Principles are a continual Clog to it. But, when theſe are removed out of the Way, it would take Poſſeſſion of the Soul without any Rival or Competitor to control it. Bad as the World is, it would then be infinitely worſe; it would be filled with, the worſt Kind of Brutes, a Set of rational Brutes, who made no other Uſe of their Reaſon, but to compaſs whatever their Hearts were ſet upon, by ſuch refined Arts of Treachery as evade the Penalties of the

Laws: It would be a Wilderneſs, where ſcarce any Traces of any Thing that is human appeared; but almoſt every Thing was ſavage, wild and horrid: It would be a perfect Hell upon Earth, if all Apprehenſions of a Hell to come were removed. In a Word, though religious Perſuaſions have not *all* the Effect they ſhould have upon Men of habitual inordinate Affections; yet ſtill *ſome* they will have, till they are intirely defaced: They will be, what a *virtuous* and *diſintereſted Minority* is in a divided Commonwealth, that of *Greece* or *Rome* for Inſtance: Though they cannot prevent ſome Meaſures from being carried, that are in a *leſs* Degree bad, yet they may be inſtrumental in defeating ſuch as are *enormouſly* ſo: They will always make them uneaſy by their Remonſtrances, till they are cruſhed. SER. VII.

But if Principles have ſome Hold even upon thoſe that are under the Dominion of Vice, it is needleſs to obſerve, what Influence they muſt have upon the Good; a determined and ſteady Courſe of Goodneſs muſt be reſolved into Principles as determinate and ſteady.

Having thus pointed out the Cauſes why Men act contrary to Conviction, I ſhall now

Ser. VII. now proceed to my ſecond general Head, *viz.* to apply Remedies.

The grand Point is, how we ſhall engage the Affections on the Side of Religion. For till that is done, the Wheels will drive heavily on: And, when that is once compaſſed, every thing elſe is, in a Manner, ſuperfluous: Now how is it that we become enamoured of any thing elſe? Half of our Affections are owing to an *arbitrary* Aſſociation of Ideas: And it would be very ſtrange, that we ſhould be incapable of a Paſſion for thoſe Objects, where there is a *juſt* Connexion of Ideas, where the Idea of Happineſs is *juſtly* connected with the Object.

There is ſcarce any thing, however unaffecting in itſelf, that ſome Men, one ſcarce well knows how, have not contracted a Paſſion, nay, a *reigning* Paſſion too for, (a *philoſophical*, *political*, or *religious* Tenet for *Inſtance* of little or no Importance) till at laſt they comprize all Excellencies in it, and for the Sake of it diſparage every thing elſe. This is matter of Fact. We ſee Inſtances of it frequently. Whatever they are talking, whatever they are writing upon, it is generally uppermoſt. They are for diſmiſſing

miſſing all other Ideas, however important, as ſo many troubleſom Intruders, that they may give themſelves wholly to this peculiar Favourite. By fixing their Thoughts long and often upon it; they imagine they ſee in it, ſome endearing Charms, which eſcape every indifferent Perſon. They have aſſociated the Idea of Worth and Valuableneſs ſo cloſely with it, that they cannot disjoin them. It is after ſome ſuch Manner, that we muſt beget in ourſelves a Love for Religion. However reluctant we may be at firſt; yet, by often muſing upon it, the Fire will kindle for it. It is not the *mere View* of any Good, no not even a *ſenſible* Good, that will *intereſt* our Paſſions, and cloſely attach them to it. When any ſenſible Object preſents itſelf to View, the Mind might ſtill retain an Indifferency for it; if it did not ſuffer the Imagination to *dwell* upon it, till it took Fire, and by Degrees *ſhut out every* Idea that made *againſt* it, *retaining* only thoſe that were *for* it. A *ſlight*, *tranſient*, *occaſional* View may produce a *wiſh* for *any* Good; and ſo it will do for the greateſt Good: But there muſt be ſeveral *deliberate Views* and *Reviews* to raiſe ſuch an *animated* and *effectual Deſire* for it, as ſhall be a Counterpoiſe

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to

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to all Temptation. It is the *Preſence* of Notions that gives them their Power: For thoſe *Notions*, that we are conſtantly *converſant* about, like thoſe *Perſons* that are *continually with us*, will in ſome Meaſure gain the *Aſcendant over* us, and *influence* our Lives and Actions. Every Man muſt judge of himſelf, whether he takes a competent Care or no by the Diſpoſition he finds himſelf in. If a Man finds, that inſtead of gaining Ground over his Vices, they gain Ground over him, if he cannot withſtand *common* and *ordinary* Temptations; he may take it for granted, he does not think often and long enough upon religious Subjects ſo as to allow them their due Weight, and give them their due Force. He has not recourſe often enough to Reading, Meditation, Prayer, and Recollection; he *abhors* perhaps *all manner of* ſpiritual *Meat*, and therefore *his Soul is hard at Death's Door*. We muſt then ſeaſon our Minds with religious Impreſſions; till they leave laſting and indelible Traces behind them, till they become ſo familiar, habitual, and natural to us; that we may as eaſily have recourſe to theſe religious Counſellors within upon all Emergencies; as we can to a faithful judicious

judicious Friend, whom we have received into our Houſe, and lodged in our Boſom. It is not enough to have a general Knowledge of our Duty repoſited in our Minds: No, we muſt have our Thoughts about us, like well diſciplined Forces, ready at a Moment's Warning upon any ſudden Invaſion. We muſt not be contented to have Oil laid up in our Veſſels: No; according to our Saviour's ſignificant Expreſſion, we muſt have our *Lamp* alway *burning by us*; that Lamp, which is to be *a Light unto our Paths*. We muſt inure ourſelves to a recollected Way of Thinking. We muſt accuſtom ourſelves to ſuch Soliloquies as theſe. "It is through God, that "I have *been holden up ever ſince I was* "*born*. It is no more in my Power to exiſt "an *Hour*, a *Moment*, of *myſelf indepen-* "*dently* of my Maker; than it was in my "Power to exiſt of *myſelf from all Eter-* "*nity*. The *Current* of my Being would "be immediately *dried up*, if it were not "*fed* by continual *Supplies* from him, with "whom is the *Well* and *Fountain* of Life. "*This Moment* I ſhould relapſe into *no-* "*thing*, and ſink into utter Extinction of "Being; if he did not *uphold* me: And can "I then,

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SER. VII. " I then, *this very Moment*, ſin *againſt* " *him*, by *whom* I am upheld, and *act* in " direct *Oppoſition* to *his* Will and Plea- " ſure, to whom I am indebted, that I " can *act at all?*"

Farther, the Law of God will never be uppermoſt in our Hearts, till we contract a *Reliſh* for it. And a Reliſh for Virtue is to be acquired juſt as it is for certain Kinds of Food, which were at firſt diſtaſteful and offenſive. It is by uſing ourſelves to them, till the firſt Averſion wears off, and a Liking for them ſucceeds in it's Room. By a Cuſtom of doing good Actions, we ſhall learn an eaſy Manner of doing them; and an eaſy Manner of doing them will ripen into a Love for them, till we *hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs*; that is, we ſhall be uneaſy, as we always are, in the Diſcontinuance of thoſe Actions, to which we have been long habituated.

But whatever we do, we muſt do quickly. We muſt not put off Things to the very laſt, upon a vain Preſumption of being able to repent whenever we pleaſe. Youth and Manhood, not advanced Age, are the proper Stages of Life for rectifying any wrong Bent of Temper. If our Rea-

ſon, that *Sun*, which God has lighted up, does not *diſpel* the *Miſts* and *Fogs* of Vice *before* the *Noon* of Life; it is generally *overcaſt* for the *whole* Day. Nay, thoſe very Vices, the Practice of which require Vigour, and Strength of Conſtitution, do not ſo properly *forſake* us in old Age, as they retire from the *outward* Acts into the *Fancy*: Of which we have a remarkable Inſtance in a *Roman* Emperor, who, though very wicked in his younger Days, became a Monſter of Vice in the Decline of Life, and repaired to *Capreæ* to be a Spectator of thoſe Scenes of Wickedneſs, in which he could no longer be an Actor. The *Vice* is not ſo properly changed, as the *Seat* of it, which is now the *Imagination*, into which it retreats, as into a *Citadel*, when no longer able to *ſally forth* or *take* the *Field* for want of ſufficient *Forces*. However that be; when we love any Thing beyond the Proportion of real Good that is in it, the Inclination muſt have impoſed upon the Judgment, by painting it beyond the Life. We annex to it ſome *additional* advantageous Ideas, that do not properly belong to it: By viewing it long and often in that falſe Light we rivet thoſe Ideas to-

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gether with it however independent; ſo that they become inſeparable. Thus the Miſer has ſo cloſely aſſociated the Ideas of Happineſs and Money, that he cannot part or keep them aſunder even when near the concluding Scene of his Life; and at the ſame Time, that he grows more *indifferent* to *every Perſon in the World*, he becomes more ſtrongly attached to the *Things* of it. This ſeems to be the Caſe of inveterate Habits. When Vices of a *deeper Dye* have once penetrated into the Subſtance, and given a *thorough Tincture* to the Soul; it ſeldom *recovers* its native and *unſullied Pureneſs*: It ſeldom becomes *white as Wool*, when it's Sins have been *red as Scarlet*.

Let them then, that are as yet untainted with bad Impreſſions, endeavour to retain that Innocence and Virtue, for which nothing can give them an Equivalent. There is a Charm in the genuine uncorrupted Purity of a virtuous Life, which is far more amiable in the Sight of God, and indeed of every rational Being; than all the Acquiſitions of Fortune, Honour, or even Knowledge. It puts one in Mind of the pure, unſpotted, Whiteneſs of the Lily, which outſhone all the artificial Hues and dazzling

dazzling Splendor of *Solomon arrayed in all his Glory*. But if we have formed any bad Habits; let us retreat betimes, and not delay our Repentance to a Seaſon of Life not very apt to learn, and much leſs apt to unlearn. SER. VII.

SERMON VIII.

The Caſe of Diverſions ſtated, and the Neceſſity of an early Application to Wiſdom ſhewn.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD, March* 2, 1739-40.

PROVERBS XVIII. 1.

Through Deſire, a Man having ſeparated himſelf, ſeeketh and intermeddleth with Wiſdom.

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DULL and inſipid is every Performance, where Inclination bears no Part: But a ſtrong Deſire to do our Duty overcomes the Difficulties that lye in the Way to the doing of it, and the very *Labour of Love* is a Pleaſure. The Heart will ſet every Engine at work, when

SER. VIII. it is thoroughly engaged on the Side of Knowledge. No ſocial Diverſion, *no Pleaſure will* interrupt it's Purſuits; becauſe then it will be it's *greateſt* Pleaſure to *ſeek and intermeddle with Wiſdom.*

A total *Separation*, however, from Society, and the Pleaſures thereof, cannot be the Meaning of my Author, becauſe that is contrary to the main Tenor of the Book of *Proverbs*; and, beſides it is obvious to obſerve, that any *one* Man's Senſe, however excellent, unleſs it mixes in *Society*, with that of *others*, always degenerates into *Singularity* and *Caprice.*

In the following Diſcourſe I ſhall therefore

I*ſt*, Attempt to ſhew how far ſocial Diverſions are allowable.

II*dly*, Point out the Neceſſity of an early and cloſe Application to Wiſdom.

III*dly*, Subjoin ſome Reflections connected with the Subject.

I*ſt* Then, I am to ſhew how far ſocial Diverſions are allowable.

In the firſt Place, when there is no Reaſon *againſt* any ſocial (or indeed any other) Pleaſure,

Pleaſure, there is always a Reaſon *for* it, *viz.* that it is a Pleaſure; juſt as when there is no Reaſon to *undergo* any Pain, there is one always, why we ſhould *not*, viz. that it is a Pain. To ſuppoſe the Deity would abridge us of any Pleaſure merely as ſuch, when it does not interfere with higher and nobler Delights, is a Notion highly derogatory to his Goodneſs, who, in forming the World, ſeems, in ſome Things to have conſulted our Pleaſure only, without any other apparent End in View. SER. VIII.

2*dly*, Diverſions are neceſſary to deceive the Cares, ſweeten the Toils, and ſmooth the Ruggedneſs of Life. Man is a ſtrange Compound of *Greatneſs* and *Littleneſs*. There is ſomething ſo *great* in our Frame, that we cannot be happy without ſuch *ſubſtantial* Pleaſures, as will ſtand the Teſt of our ſevereſt Reflections: and yet withal ſomething ſo *little* in our Compoſition, that we cannot do altogether without ſuch innocent *Amuſements*, as may take our Minds off from their Abſtractions, and gently lead them into the more familiar Traces of Thought. And he, who applies himſelf to his Studies or any other Employment with proper Intervals of Refreſhment to

SER. VIII. recruit his Spirits, will upon the whole do more good, as he bids fairer to prolong his Life; than he, who, by too eager and uninterrupted an Application, deadens his Spirits, impairs his Health, and wears out the very Springs of Life.

Further, Diverſions are neceſſary under any Affliction. For the firſt Step towards a Recovery of Happineſs is to ſteal ourſelves gradually from a Senſe of our Miſery: And this is to be done, not by putting or keeping our *thinking* Faculty upon the *Stretch*; but by lulling our unquiet and too active Thoughts to *reſt*. And, let Men ſay what they will; thoſe Hours, which are waſted away in *indulging* an idle *Sullenneſs* or a moaping *Melancholy*, are no leſs placed to our Account; than thoſe, which fly away unperceived in unthinking *Mirth* and *Gaiety*. It is the ſame Thing, as to all religious Intents and Purpoſes, whether our Time is miſpent in *Vanity*, or in Anguiſh and *Vexation of Spirit*.

3*dly*, Diverſions are requiſite to endear us to one another. For it is a Miſtake to think, that the *ſolid* and *material* Services we do one another are the only Cements of ſocial Love and Union: Becauſe we ſeldom have

have it in our Power to do them; and, beſides, they are expenſive to the Giver, and often uneaſy to the Receiver, who would not perhaps be obliged for very liberal Gifts, to any, but him, who *giveth liberally and upbraideth not.* But to comply with Men's Taſtes, as far as we innocently can, in the *little* Incidents, and *daily Occurrences* of Life, to bear a Part in their favourite *Diverſions* and to adjuſt our Tempers to theirs, it is this, that knits Men's Hearts to one another, and lays the Foundation of Friendſhips. On the contrary, the Want of the little Arts to render a Man pleaſing and agreeable ſhall do him more Diſſervice, than an hundred ſubſtantial and manly Accompliſhments can counterbalance or repair. And the Reaſon is obvious. Few have perhaps Underſtanding to diſcern, or Candour to acknowledge, or Generoſity to reward *ſuperior* and *ſolid Merit:* But the Bulk of Mankind can eaſily ſee, be affected with, and offended at, *little Singularities* and *Incompliances* in a Man's Behaviour, which lye exactly level to their Capacities. It is an eaſy Matter for a Perſon of ſuperior Senſe to ſoar *above* the common Sphere: His chief Difficulty is

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is to let himſelf *down to* the common Level, without which all his great Knowledge will be, in *ſome* Meaſure, *uſeleſs*. It is a Sign of an undiſtinguiſhing Judgment to imagine, that every Thing, that is *ſmall*, is alſo *trivial*. That is *trivial*, which is of *no Conſequence*: whereas *ſmall* Matters may be the Foundation of *great* ones, and by our Behaviour in Them we form the Mind to good Habits, as I have ſhewn in a former Sermon, or contract habitually bad Diſpoſitions.

But this puts me in Mind 4thly, that Diverſions are requiſite to enlarge the Uſefulneſs and Influence of a good Character.

The Man, who though *generally* intent on *great* Matters, yet can *occaſionally* condeſcend to *little* Things, without making *himſelf* little, *ſingular* in nothing but *Goodneſs*, and *uncomplying* in nothing but *Vice*: The Man, who is in all Things like unto *us*, *Sin* only *excepted*, takes the moſt effectual Method of making us like unto *Him* in *Virtue*. Whereas a Perſon, who looks upon all Pleaſantry as criminal, whatever *other* Duties he may practiſe, forgets one of the moſt *material* of all, that of *gaining over* others to the *Intereſts* of Virtue, by making it *appear* to be, what it really

is,

is, a *lovely Form*. It is true, that, inſtead of paying an implicit Obedience to Cuſtom, and blindly following a Multitude to do Evil; it is our Duty to be humble enough to follow a good Example, where it is, and yet brave enough to ſet one to the World, where it is not. But Singularity in Matters of *no* Moment diſcredits a Man's Virtues, and diſqualifies him from being uſeful in Affairs of *Conſequence*. It is natural for Perſons to imitate thoſe, whom they love: It would be therefore worth the while for the Good to endear, by little Compliances, their *Perſons* to the *Affections* of Mankind, that they might recommend their *Actions* to their *Imitation*. SER. VIII.

Our Bleſſed Saviour was ſo far from giving Religion a gloomy Appearance, that the firſt Miracle, which he wrought, was at a Scene of Feſtivity, where he *turned the Water into Wine*. And he, who gave and exemplified the *ſtricteſt Rules* of Life, gave a Sanction to the innocent *Comforts* and *Refreſhments* of it. His Life was indeed the very *Beauty of Holineſs*, a *faultleſs* Form, *finiſhed*, *regular* and *exact*; yet ſoftened by an *eaſy Sweetneſs* and Humility: An *unaffected* Grace, without any *forbidding*

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bidding Mien, gave a powerful and *endearing Charm* to it. When he was aſked *why his Diſciples faſted not*; his Anſwer ſhews, that he was far from putting, at firſt, *hard*, and *rigorous* Duties upon *raw* and *tender* Minds; the obvious Meaning of *not putting new Wine into old Bottles*: a Rule, which, if it had been obſerved by ſome well-meaning Reformers among us, might have prevented that religious Deſpair and Frenzy, of which we have ſeen ſome ſhocking Inſtances among their Followers. Religious Severities are certainly neceſſary in ſome Degree, and under proper Regulations; but an Exceſs of them, as we muſt have obſerved in ſome late Examples, however it may have *blunted* the Edge of the *ſenſual* Appetite, has ſet a much *keener* Edge on the *Spirits*, and embittered the Temper. If it has mortified the Deeds of the Fleſh, and damped the Inclination to animal Pleaſures; it has produced far more incurable Vices, *viz.* ſpiritual Pride, Rancour and an Uncharitableneſs equal, at leaſt, to that of the Papiſts. The ſame Temper, which, in a continued *high Enjoyment* of Life, would diſcharge itſelf in ſudden *Eruptions* of *Rage* and *Fury*; in too *low* and

reduced a State of Body, ſettles into a laſting *Peeviſhneſs*, Acrimony of Spirit, and a ſplenetic Diſreliſh of every thing in this World, which ſurely is not very conſiſtent with an affectionate Love to the Maker of it. A *Diſſipation* of Thought may be ſometimes as requiſite for the *over-penſive* and thoughtful; as a *Recollection* of Thought is for Men of quite *another* Turn. That Retirement, that Application to Meditation and Reading, which may be neceſſary to reduce the Volatile and Airy into a ſober and compoſed way of Thinking; might drive others of a melancholy Caſt of Mind into Deſpondency or even Deſpair: As the ſame Diet, which would be very fit to reduce a pampered and over-ſanguine Conſtitution, might be prejudicial to a thin, meagre and conſumptive Perſon. SER. VIII.

This Caution, however, in *general*, is highly neceſſary: that we ought to *guard* moſt againſt *that* Extreme, to which human Nature *leans* the moſt; which is, by no Means, that of an *over-ſtrict Application* to *Wiſdom*. For we are rather apt to *leſſen*, than enlarge the Bounds of our *Duty*; and on the other Hand to *extend* too far, than to ſhorten the Line of our *Liberty*.

If

SER. VIII. If it be aſked, when we exceed the Bounds of Reaſon in purſuing our Diverſions; I anſwer, If, after having made a Party in ſome Entertainments, the Soul can recal her wandring Thoughts and fix them, with the ſame Life and Energy, as is natural to us in other Caſes, upon any Subject worthy of a rational Creature; it is plain we have not gone too far: Under theſe Regulations, we may be gay without Folly, and virtuous without Moroſeneſs. But, if they leave behind them a Diſreliſh for, and an Indiſpoſition to better Things; if the Thoughts of what we have ſeen, heard or done intrude into our Minds, quite diſſipate our Attention, and demand an Audience of the Soul; we have acted contrary to the End of Diverſions, which is to unbend, and not to enfeeble the Vigour of the Soul.

It is farther to be conſidered, that though certain Amuſements, the little Play-things of Life, may not ſeem intirely foreign to a more *youthful* Age; *they* certainly trifle away *this* Life with a very ill Grace, who ſtand juſt upon the Verge, of *another*: It ſhocks one almoſt as much, as to ſee a Man playing and dancing upon the Brink of a Precipice,

Precipice, from which he is every Moment in imminent Danger of falling: — that, though ſome Men place their chief *Happineſs* in Diverſions, yet they are, in themſelves, ſtrong Proofs of human *Miſery*: For, if we were happy *in* ourſelves, there would be no Occaſion to divert our Thoughts *from* ourſelves. And which of the two is the moſt pitiable Object; he, who goes to other Men's Doors to beg his *daily Bread*; or he, who goes thither to beg his *daily Happineſs*, being too poor to furniſh out his own Entertainment? He, whoſe Company is an inſupportable Burthen to himſelf, is very much obliged to the good Nature and Eaſineſs of his Companions, that it is not an inſupportable Burthen to them too. SER. VIII.

There is ſuch a Principle of Activity in human Nature, (eſpecially in Youth,) that there is no great Danger, we ſhould fall into an Habit of doing juſt *nothing at all*: The greateſt Hazard is, that we ſhould contract an Habit of doing nothing to the *Purpoſe*, and of fooling away Life in an impertinent Courſe of Diverſions. And intire State of *Inaction* is not to be dreaded: what we are to guard againſt, is, that we do

SER. VIII. do not fall into an *eaſy Inſignificance* of Action, perſevere in it, and then go *out* of the World with this melancholy Reflection, that we have ſcarce done one Action, for which it was worth coming *into* it: Our Lives being like *a Tale that is told*; a Tale harmleſs, it may be, inoffenſive and far ſpun out, but very inſipid, trifling and unmeaning, containing no uſeful Moral, or rational Entertainment; ſcarce *worth* the *minding*, while the *Thread* of it was *carrying on*, *ending* as *poorly* as it *begun*, and *forgotten* almoſt as ſoon as *over*.

II. But this brings me to my ſecond Head, *viz.* the Neceſſity of an early and cloſe Application to Wiſdom.

It is neceſſary to habituate our Minds, in our younger Years, to ſome Employment, which may engage our Thoughts, and fill the Capacity of the Soul at a riper Age. For, however we may roam in Youth from Folly to Folly, too *volatile* for *Reſt*, too *ſoft* and *effeminate* for *Induſtry*; ever ambitious to make a ſplendid Figure, and to *ſhine before Men*, but never endeavouring to *glorify our Father which is in Heaven*: Yet the Time will come, when we

we ſhall outgrow the Reliſh of *childiſh* Amuſements. And, if we are not provided with a Taſte for *manly Satisfactions* to ſucceed in their Room, we muſt of courſe become miſerable at an Age more difficult to be pleaſed. While Men, however unthinking and unemployed, enjoy an inexhauſtible *Flow* of *vigorous Spirits*; a conſtant *Succeſſion* of *gay* Ideas, which flutter and ſport in the Brain, makes them pleaſed with *themſelves*, and with every *Frolick as trifling* as *themſelves*. But, when the Ferment of their Blood abates, and the *Freſhneſs* of their Youth, *like the Morning Dew*, paſſes away; their Spirits flag for want of Entertainments more ſatisfactory in themſelves, and more ſuited to a manly Age: And the Soul, from a *ſprightly* Impertinence, from *quick* Senſations, and *florid* Deſires, ſubſides into a *dead Calm*, and ſinks into a *flat Stupidity*. The Fire of a glowing Imagination (the Property of Youth) may make Folly look pleaſing, and lend a Beauty to Objects, which have none inherent in them: Juſt as the Sun Beams may paint a Cloud, and diverſify it with beautiful Stains of Light, however dark, unſubſtantial and empty in

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SER. VIII. itſelf. But nothing can ſhine with undiminiſhed Luſtre, but Religion and Knowledge, which are eſſentially and intrinſically bright. Take it therefore for granted, which you will find by Experience, that nothing can be *long* ENTERTAINING, but what is in ſome Meaſure *beneficial*: Becauſe nothing elſe will bear a calm and ſedate *Review*.

You may be fancied for a while, upon the Account of good Nature, the inſeparable Attendant upon a Fluſh of ſanguine Health, and a Fulneſs of youthful Spirits: But you will find, in Proceſs of Time, that among the wiſe and good, *uſeleſs good Nature* is the Object of *Pity*, *ill Nature* of *Hatred*; but Nature *beautified* and *improved* by an Aſſemblage of *moral* and *intellectual* Endowments, is the only Object of a ſolid and laſting *Eſteem*.

There is not a greater Inlet to Miſery and Vices of all Kinds, than the not knowing how to paſs our vacant Hours. For what remains to be done, when the firſt Part of their Lives, who are not brought up to any manual Employment, is ſlipt away without an acquired Reliſh for Reading, or Taſte for other rational Satiſfactions?

factions? That they ſhould purſue their Pleaſures? But, Religion apart, common Prudence will warn them to *tye up* the *Wheel*, as they begin to go *down* the HILL of Life. Shall they then apply themſelves to their Studies? Alas! the Seed-Time of Life is already paſt: The enterprizing and ſpirited Ardour of Youth being over, without having been applied to thoſe valuable Purpoſes for which it was given; all Ambition of excelling upon generous and laudable Schemes quite ſtagnates. If they have not ſome poor Expedient to *deceive* the *Time*, or, to ſpeak more properly, to *deceive themſelves*; the Length of a *Day* will ſeem tedious to them, who perhaps have the Unreaſonableneſs to complain of the Shortneſs of *Life* in general. When the former Part of our Life has been nothing but *Vanity*, the latter End of it can be nothing but *Vexation*. In ſhort we muſt be miſerable, without ſome Employment to *fix*, or ſome Amuſement to *diſſipate* our Thoughts: The latter we cannot command in all Places, nor reliſh at all Times; and therefore there is an abſolute Neceſſity for the former. We may purſue this or that *new* Pleaſure; we may be SER. VIII.

Ser. VIII. fond for a while of a *new* Acquiſition: But when the Graces of Novelty are worn off, and the Briſkneſs of our firſt Deſire is over, the Tranſition is very quick and ſudden, from an eager Fondneſs to a cool Indifference. Hence there is a reſtleſs Agitation in our Minds, ſtill craving ſomething new, ſtill unſatisfied with it, when poſſeſſed; till *Melancholy encreaſes*, as we *advance* in Years, like *Shadows lengthening* towards the *Cloſe* of Day.

Hence it is, that Men of this Stamp are continually complaining, that the Times are altered for the worſe: Becauſe the Sprightlineſs of their Youth repreſented every Thing in the moſt engaging Light; and when Men are in high good Humour with *themſelves*, they are apt to be ſo with *all* around: The Face of Nature brightens up, and the Sun ſhines with a more agreeable Luſtre. But when old Age has cut them off from the Enjoyment of falſe Pleaſures, and habitual Vice has given them a Diſtaſte for the only true and laſting Delights; when a Retroſpect of their paſt Lives preſents nothing to View but one wide Track of uncultivated Ground; a Soul diſtempered with Spleen, Remorſe

and an Inſenſibility of each rational Satiſ- SER. VIII.
faction, darkens and diſcolours every Object; and the Change is not in the Times, but in them, who have been forſaken by thoſe Gratifications, which they would not forſake.

How much otherwiſe is it with thoſe, who have laid up an inexhauſtible Fund of Knowledge! When a Man has been laying out that Time in the Purſuit of ſome great and important Truth, which others waſte in a Circle of gay Follies; he is conſcious of having acted up to the Dignity of his Nature; and from that Conſciouſneſs there reſults that ſerene Complacency, which, though not ſo violent, is much preferable to the Pleaſures of the animal Life. He can travel on from Strength to Strength: For, in Literature as in War, each new Conqueſt, which he gains, impowers him to puſh his Conqueſts ſtill farther, and to enlarge the Empire of Reaſon. Thus he is ever in a progreſſive State, ſtill making new Acquirements, ſtill animated with Hopes of future Diſcoveries.

Some may alledge, in Bar to what I have ſaid, and as an Excuſe for their Indo-

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lence, the Want of proper Talents to make any Progreſs in Learning. To which I anſwer, that few Stations require uncommon Abilities to diſcharge them well; for the ordinary Offices of Life, that Share of Apprehenſion, which falls to the Bulk of Mankind, provided we improve it, will ſerve well enough. Bright and ſparkling Parts are like *Diamonds*, which may adorn the Proprietor, but are not neceſſary for the Good of the World: Whereas common Senſe is like *current Coin*; we have, every Day, in the ordinary Occurrences of Life, Occaſion for it: And if we would but call it into Action, it would carry us much greater Lengths than we ſeem to be aware of. Men may extol, as much as they pleaſe, fine, exalted and ſuperior Senſe: Yet common Senſe, if attended with Humility and Induſtry, is the beſt Guide to beneficial Truth, and the beſt Preſervative againſt any fatal Errors in Knowledge, and notorious Miſconducts in Life. For none are, in the Nature of the Thing, more *liable* to *Error*, than thoſe who have a Diſtaſte for *plain ſober Senſe* and dry *Reaſoning*; which yet is the Caſe of thoſe, whoſe *warm* and elevated *Imagination*,

whoſe *uncommon Fire* and *Vivacity* makes them in love with nothing, but what is *ſtriking*, *marvellous*, and *dazzling*. For great Wits, like great Beauties, look upon mere *Eſteem* as a *flat inſipid Thing*; nothing leſs than *Admiration* will content them. To gain the Good-Will of Mankind by being uſeful to them, is, in their Opinion, a poor low groveling Aim: Their Ambition is to draw the Eyes of the World upon them by dazzling and ſurprizing them; a Temper which draws them off from the Love of Truth, and conſequently ſubjects them to groſs Miſtakes. For they will not love Truth as *ſuch*; they will love it only, when it happens to be *ſurpriſing* and *uncommon*, which few *important* Truths are: The Love of *Novelty* will be the predominant Paſſion; that of *Truth* will only influence them, when it does *not interfere* with it. Perhaps nothing ſooner miſleads Men out of the Road of Truth, than to have the wild dancing Light of a bright Imagination playing before them. Perhaps they have too much Life and Spirit to have Patience enough to go to the Bottom of a Subject, and trace up every Argument, through a long tedious Proceſs,

Ser. VIII. to it's Original. Perhaps they have that Delicacy of Make, which fits them for a ſwift and ſpeedy Race; but does not enable them to carry a great Weight, or to go through any long Journey. Whereas Men of fewer Ideas, who lay them in Order, compare, and examine them, and go on, Step by Step, in a gradual Chain of Thinking; make up by Induſtry and Caution, what they want in Quickneſs of Apprehenſion. Be not diſcouraged, if you do not meet with Succeſs at firſt. Obſerve, (for it lies within the Compaſs of any Man's Obſervation) that he, who has been long habituated to one Kind of Knowledge, is utterly at a Loſs in another, to which he is unaccuſtomed; till, by repeated Efforts, he finds a progreſſive Opening of his Faculties: And then he wonders, how he could be ſo long in finding out a Connexion of Ideas, which, to a *practiſed* Underſtanding, is very obvious. But by neglecting to *uſe* your Faculties, you will, in Time, loſe the very *Power* of uſing them: According to that of our bleſſed Saviour, *from him that hath not* any *additional* Improvement, *ſhall be taken away even that which he hath*, the *original* Talent intruſted to him. Others

Others there are, who plead an Exemption from Study, becauſe their Fortune makes them independent of the World, and they need not be beholden to it for a Maintenance. That is, becauſe their Situation in Life exempts them from the Neceſſity of ſpending their Time in *ſervile* Offices and Hardſhips; therefore they may diſpoſe of it, juſt as they *pleaſe*: It is to imagine, becauſe God has impowered them to ſingle out the *beſt* Means of employing their Hours, *viz.* in Reading, Meditation, in the higheſt Inſtances of Piety and Charity; therefore they may throw them away in a Round of *Impertinence*, *Vanity*, and *Folly*. The Apoſtle's Rule, that, *if any Man will not work, neither* ſhould *he eat*; extends to the Rich, as well as Poor; only ſuppoſing, that there are different *Kinds* of Work aſſigned to each. The Reaſon is the ſame in both Caſes, *viz.* that he, who will *do no* Good, ought not to *receive* or *enjoy* any. As we all are *joint* Traders and *Partners* in Life, he forfeits his Right to any Share in the *common Stock* of Happineſs, who does not endeavour to contribute his *Quota* or allotted Part to it: The publick Happineſs being nothing, but the Sum total

Ser. VIII. total of each Individual's Contribution to it. An eaſy Fortune does not ſet Men free from Labour and Induſtry in *general*; it only exempts them from ſome *particular* Kinds of Labour. It is not a Bleſſing, as it gives them Liberty to do *nothing at all*; but as it gives them Liberty wiſely to chuſe and ſteadily to proſecute the *moſt ennobling* Exerciſes, and the moſt *improving* Employments, the Purſuit of Truth, the Practice of Virtue, the Service of that God, *who giveth them all Things richly to enjoy*, in ſhort the doing and being every Thing that is *commendable*: though nothing *merely* in Order to be *commended*. That Time, which others muſt employ in tilling the Ground (which often deceives their Expectation) with the Sweat of their Brow, they may lay out in cultivating the Mind, a Soil always grateful to the Care of the Tiller. The Sum of what I would ſay is this: That, though you are not confined to any *particular* Calling, yet you have a *general* one: Which is to watch over your Heart, and to improve your Head; to make yourſelf Maſter of all thoſe Accompliſhments, *viz.* an enlarged Compaſs of Thought, that flowing Humanity, and Generoſity,

Generoſity, which are neceſſary to *become* a great Fortune; and of all thoſe Perfections, *viz.* Moderation, Humility, and Temperance, which are neceſſary to *bear* a ſmall one patiently; but eſpecially it is your Duty to acquire a Taſte for thoſe Pleaſures, which, after they are taſted, *go off* agreeably, and leave behind them a grateful and delightful Flavour on the Mind. SER. VIII.

Happy that Man, who, unembarraſſed by vulgar Cares, Maſter of himſelf, his Time and Fortune, ſpends his *Time* in making *himſelf wiſer*; and his *Fortune* in making *others* (and *therefore* himſelf) *happier*: Who, as the Will and Underſtanding are the two *ennobling* Faculties of the Soul, thinks himſelf not complete, till his *Underſtanding* be beautified with the valuable Furniture of *Knowledge*; as well as his *Will* enriched with every *Virtue*: Who has furniſhed himſelf with all the Advantages to reliſh Solitude, and enliven Converſation; when ſerious, not ſullen; and when chearful, not indiſcreetly gay; His Ambition not to be admired for a falſe *Glare* of *Greatneſs*; but to be beloved for the *gentle* and *ſober Luſtre* of his *Wiſdom* and *Good-*

Ser. VIII. *Goodneſs.* The greateſt Miniſter of State has not more Buſineſs to do in a publick Capacity, than he, and indeed every Man elſe, may find in the retired and ſtill Scenes of Life. Even in his private Walks, every Thing that is viſible convinceth him, there is preſent a Being inviſible. Aided by natural Philoſophy, he reads plain legible Traces of the Divinity in every Thing he meets: He ſees the Deity in *every Tree*, as well as *Moſes* did in the *burning Buſh*, though not in ſo *glaring* a *Manner*; And when he ſees him, he adores him with the Tribute of a grateful Heart.

III. I ſhall now, as I propoſed, draw towards a Concluſion, by ſubjoining ſome Reflections which have a Connexion with the Subject.

1*ſt*, Let us ſet a juſt Value upon, and make a due Uſe of thoſe Advantages, which we of this Place enjoy, who are here *ſeparated* from the buſy World *to ſeek and intermeddle with Wiſdom.*

One conſiderable Advantage is, that regular Method of Study, too much neglected in other Places, which obtains here. Nothing is more common elſewhere, than for Perſons

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Perſons to plunge, at once, into the very *Depth* of *Science*, far beyond their own, without having learned the firſt Rudiments: Nothing more common than for ſome to paſs themſelves upon the World for great Scholars, by the Help of *univerſal Dictionaries*, *Abridgments*, and *Indexes*: By which Means they gain an *uſeleſs Smattering* in every Branch of Literature, juſt enough to enable them to talk fluently, or rather impertinently, upon moſt Subjects; but not to think juſtly and deeply upon any: Like thoſe, who have a *general ſuperficial Acquaintance* with almoſt every Body: To cultivate an *intimate* and entire *Friendſhip* with *one* or *two* worthy Perſons, would be of more Service to them. The true genuine Way to make a ſubſtantial Scholar, is, what takes Place here, *viz.* to begin with thoſe general Principles of Reaſoning, upon which all Science depends, and which give a Light to every Part of Literature; to make gradual Advances, a ſlow, but ſure Proceſs; to *travel* gently, with proper Guides to direct us, through the moſt beautiful and fruitful *Regions* of Knowledge in *general*; before we fix ourſelves in, and confine ourſelves to any *particular*

Province

Ser. VIII. *Province* of it: It being the great Secret of Education not to make a Man a complete Maſter of any Branch of Science, but to give his Mind that *Freedom*, *Openneſs*, and *Extent*, which ſhall *empower* him to maſter it, or indeed any other, *whenever* he ſhall turn the Bent of his Studies that Way: Which is beſt done, by ſetting before him, in his earlier Years, a GENERAL View of the whole intellectual World: Whereas an *early* and *entire* Attachment to one *particular* Calling narrows the Abilities of the Mind to that Degree; that he can ſcarce think out of that Track to which he is accuſtomed.

The next Advantage I ſhall mention is, a Direction in the Choice of Authors upon the moſt material Subjects. For it is perhaps a great Truth, that *Learning* might be reduced to a much *narrower* Compaſs, if one were to read none but *original* Authors, meaning by original Authors, thoſe, who write chiefly from their own Fund of Senſe, without treading ſervilely in the Steps of others.

Here, too, a generous Emulation quickens our Endeavours, and the *Friend* improves the *Scholar*: The *Tedioufneſs* of the *Way*

to

to *Truth* is inſenſibly *beguiled* by having *Fellow-Travellers*, who keep an even Pace with us: Each Light diſpenſes a brighter Flame, by mixing it's ſocial Rays with thoſe of others. Here we live ſequeſtered from Noiſe and Hurry, far from the great Scene of Buſineſs, Vanity, and Idleneſs, our Hours all our own. Here it is, as in the *Athenian* Torch-Race, where a Series of Men have ſucceſſively tranſmitted from one to another the Torch of Knowledge; and no ſooner has one quitted it, but another equally able takes the Lamp to diſpenſe Light to all within his Sphere *. But the greateſt Commendation of theſe Seminaries is, that they have been conſtantly blackened by the Enemies of Religion and Goodneſs. Thoſe, who have planted their Batteries againſt the Chriſtian Religion, have always ſingled out the Univerſities as the Mark of their Hoſtilities: which is virtually to confeſs, that they are the Bulwarks of Religion, and that they can never ſucceed in their audacious Attempts, till they have brought them into Diſcredit. SER. VIII.

Others there may be, who cenſure them without juſt Grounds. For it is a Fault,

*— Quaſi curſores, vitai lampada tradunt. *Lucretius.*

to

Ser. VIII. to which Men are very ſubject, to diſlike what is confeſſedly *good*; becauſe their *crude Conceptions*, never reduced to Practice, may ſuggeſt ſomething in their Opinion *better*. But, in Fact, where is there a better Method of Education to be found? It is eaſy to form fine *Utopian* Theories; it is eaſy to *govern* and manage our *own Ideas*, the World *within*: For nothing is *more* pliant and obſequious, than our *own Ideas*: But to govern the World *without*, far *more ſtubborn* and *uncomplying* than our *Ideas*, and new model it to our Schemes, this is the great Difficulty. If they were to proceed from Theory to Fact, they would find ſeveral Difficulties ſtart up, which they were not aware of; and that Things upon Experiment never fully anſwer the flattering Notions, which they may entertain in their Imaginations.

Diſmiſſing therefore theſe Viſionaries, let me proceed to tell you, that our Hopes are placed upon you; that, whatever Clamours may have been raiſed againſt you by Men, who weakly or wickedly *confound* the *Innocent* with the *Guilty*, by a *Judgment* directly contrary to THAT of the *laſt* Day, (for *that ſevers* the one from the other;)

other;) yet we look upon you for ſo conſi- SER. VIII.
derable a Part, as the moſt uncorrupt Part of the Nation, in Principles at leaſt; and, I think, in Morals too. And may you long continue ſo! For the Univerſities have been juſtly called the *Eyes* of the Nation: And if *the Eyes* of the Nation *be evil, the whole Body of it* muſt *be full of Darkneſs*, Ignorance and Vice.

May none of us therefore, 2dly, complain, that the Diſcipline of the Place is too ſtrict; when all the World beſides are complaining of the Remiſſneſs of it. May we rather reflect, that there needs nothing elſe to make a Man completely *miſerable*; but to let him, in the *moſt dangerous* Stage of Life, carve out an *Happineſs* for *himſelf*, without any Check upon the Sallies of Youth. Thoſe to whom you have been over-indulgent, and perhaps could not have been otherwiſe, without proceeding to Extremities, never to be uſed but in deſperate Caſes; thoſe have been always the moſt liberal of their Cenſures and Invectives againſt you: They put one in Mind of *Adonijah*'s Rebellion againſt *David* his Father: Becauſe *his Father had not diſpleaſed him at any time in ſaying, Why haſt thou*

Ser. VIII. *done ſo?* It is a certain Sign, Men want Reſtraints, when they are impatient under any; too headſtrong to be governed by Authority, too weak to be conducted by Reaſon.

It were to be wiſhed that they, who claim greater Indulgences, would ſeriouſly reflect, that the glaring *Irregularities* of *two* or *three* Members bring an *undiſtinguiſhing* Cenſure upon a whole *Body*, make a Noiſe in, and alarm, the World, as if all Fleſh had here corrupted their Ways: Whereas the *ſober modeſt Worth* of a much *greater* Number, who here in private attend the Duties of the Wiſe and Good, muſt, in the Nature of the Thing, *eſcape* the *Notice* of the World. *Notorious Diſorders*, how *few* ſoever are concerned, *ſtrike* upon the *Senſes* of ſome, and *affect* the *Paſſions* of many more; by which (their Senſes and Paſſions) the Groſs of Mankind generally judge of Things: but it requires ſome *Expence* of *Reflection*, to which the Bulk of Mankind will never put themſelves, to conſider, that *great* Numbers muſt have ſpent their Time *profitably*, formed *Habits* of *juſt* Thinking here, and laid *in* that Stock of *Knowledge* which they

have *produced* into *View*, in a more public Sphere: that thoſe Vices, which they complain of, may not be the *native Growth* of the *Place*; but *imported* from *irregular* and undiſciplined *Families*, from *Schools*, and from the *worſt* of Schools, the *World* at *large*, when Youth are entred into it too ſoon.

Laſtly conſider, that it is a ſure Indication of good Senſe to be diffident of it. We then, and not till then, are *growing wiſe*; when we begin to diſcern, how *weak* and *unwiſe* we are. An abſolute *Perfection* of Underſtanding is impoſſible: He makes the neareſt Approaches to it, who has the Senſe to diſcern, and the Humility to acknowledge it's Imperfections. Modeſty always ſits gracefully upon Youth: It covers a Multitude of Faults, and doubles the Luſtre of every Virtue, which it ſeems to hide: the *Perfections* of Men being like thoſe Flowers, which appear more beautiful, when their Leaves are a little contracted and folded up; than when they are full-blown, and diſplay themſelves, without any Reſerve, to the View.

We are, ſome of us, very fond of Knowledge, and apt to value ourſelves upon any

SER. VIII. Proficiency in the Sciences: One Science, however, there is, worth more than all the reſt, and that is the Science of Living well: which ſhall remain, when, *whether there be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be Knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away.* As to new Notions, and new Doctrines, of which this Age is very fruitful, the Time will come, when *we ſhall have no Pleaſure in them*; nay the Time ſhall come, when they ſhall be exploded, and would have been forgotten, if they had not been preſerved in thoſe excellent Books, which contain a Confutation of them; like Inſects preſerved for Ages in Amber, which otherwiſe would ſoon have returned to the common Maſs of Things. But a firm Belief of Chriſtianity, and a Practice ſuitable to it, will ſupport and invigorate the Mind *to the laſt*, and *moſt* of all at laſt, at that important Hour, which muſt decide our Hopes and Apprehenſions: And the Wiſdom, which like our Saviour cometh from above, will through his Merits bring us thither. And indeed all our other Studies and Purſuits, however different, ought to be ſubſervient to, and center in this grand Point, the Purſuit of eternal Happineſs, by being good in ourſelves, and

uſeful to the World. Soon, very ſoon, the *Diſputer* of this World may be no more: Of *this* World, ſays St. *Paul:* For Diſputes will have no Place in another. But the *meek* and *humble Chriſtian*, who chiefly deſired to *underſtand*, that he might *direct* his *Will*, and to *know*, that he might *act* rightly, is a Character, which will ſtand us in Stead for ever——When Pride and Self-Confidence ſhall be no more. *For* we ſhall no more know in *Part*. SER. VIII.



SERMON IX.

On the Government of the Thoughts.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*, 1734.

PROVERBS IV. 23.

Keep thy Heart with all Diligence: For out of it are the Iſſues of Life.

THE Meaning of which Words is: Keep a ſtrict Guard over the Workings of your Mind, your Thoughts and Inclinations, of which the Heart is commonly ſuppoſed to be the Seat: For your Life and Converſation will be conformable to the main Current of your Thoughts and Deſires. SER. IX.

All Sin confeſſedly conſiſting in the Will; he, that wills the Commiſſion of a wicked Action, is as guilty before God,

Ser. IX. who ſeeth in Secret, as if he had actually committed the Fact. For what ſhould hinder the Man, who deliberately indulges ſinful Thoughts, from reducing them to Practice? It is not the Fear of God: For then he would not have given an uncontroled Looſe to his Thoughts, awed by that Being, who is of too diſcerning Eyes not to behold the Impurity of his Heart, and of too pure Eyes to behold it with Pleaſure.

No: It was another Principle that reſtrained him, a Fear of what the World would ſay. A Conduct highly affrontive this! To be Fool-hardy towards God, and a Coward towards Man; to brave the Almighty Diſpleaſure of his Maker, and yet dread the impotent Cenſures of the World.

The Soul is ever buſy and at work: There is no Pauſe, no Suſpenſion of Thought, at leaſt while we are awake. Think we *muſt*—But what to think upon—what *Track* to purſue, inſtead of giving ourſelves an unconfined Range, in that wide and ſpacious *Field* of Thinking, which opens itſelf to us on every Hand — This ought to be our Study, and ſhall be my preſent Enquiry.

Suffer

Suffer me then,

I. To enquire how far we have or may have a Command over our Thoughts, and conſequently how far we are accountable for them.

II. To lay down ſome Directions for the Government of our Thoughts.

I. I am to enquire how far we have or may have a Command over our Thoughts, and conſequently how far we are accountable for them.

1*ſt*, It is impoſſible to hinder *irregular*, *fantaſtick*, evil Thoughts from *riſing* up in our Minds. *Ill* Thoughts, like *ill* Company, will be ſometimes obtruding and forcing themſelves upon us: But then we may chuſe, whether we will cultivate a Familiarity and intimate Acquaintance with them: We may do as we pleaſe, whether we will give them a friendly Entertainment; or on the other Hand, diſmiſs theſe audacious and impertinent Intruders, with this ſignificant Rebuke; "*Away* "*from* ME, *ye wicked* Thoughts, *I will* "*keep the Commandments of God.*"

2*dly*,

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2*dly*, It is not in our Power to prevent Diſtractions, Interruption, and Avocation of Thought, even in our religious Addreſſes to God. While the Soul is *immerſed* in Matter, it will be ſometimes too languid to *raiſe* it's Thoughts, or too volatile to *fix* them ſteadily upon God. This is our *Frailty*, our *Misfortune*, but will not be imputed to us as a *Sin*, provided we *ſtrive* againſt it: And when we have done *all* we *can*, we have *done* all we *ought*. For this Reaſon, as ſoon as we enter the Sanctuary, we ſhould beg the Aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, that our Thoughts may be *fixed*: That we may be collected in ourſelves, and ſerve God with that *undivided* Attention, which is due from a Creature to his Creator; as knowing, that it is ridiculous to expect *God* will hear *us*, when *we* really do not hear ourſelves; which is the Caſe, when our Lips move as it were mechanically, but our Minds are abſent and inattentive. It was with this View, * that in the ancient *Greek* Liturgies, the Deacon was ordered to cry aloud, ἐκτενῶς δεηθῶμεν, *Let us pray fervently*; and again, ſome Time after, ἐκτενέστερον, let us pray *more* fervently. And

* See *Biſſe*'s Beauty of Holineſs.

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it would be well, if we would make this uſe of that exhortatory Admonition, which occurs ſo often in *our* Liturgy, *viz.* "Let us "pray:" And which was inſerted with this Deſign, among others, to rally our undiſciplined Thoughts, to recal our ſtraggling Ideas, and to put us in Mind, that we ought to be praying with *an Affectionate Application.* SER. IX.

3*dly*, Our Thoughts are not abſolutely free, juſt after we have received ſome conſiderable Loſs or Diſaſter. All that we can do, is to take Care, that we do not give up our Mind a Prey to Melancholy, and *willfully* indulge our Sorrows; which is the Caſe of many, even under *imaginary* Grievances.

They will ſupinely ſit in a penſive Poſture, with folded Arms, brooding over their Woes, till they imagine themſelves upon the Confines of another World; or, if they be of a religious Turn, they ſhall fancy, that *the Arrows of the Almighty are within them, the Poiſon whereof drinketh up their Spirits.* Their Reaſon ſhall be either entirely ſuſpended, or only employed to dwell upon and heighten thoſe darkſom Ideas, the Imagery of a Melancholic Fancy, which

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which preſent themſelves to View. Thus their Mind ſhall reſemble a Room hung about with black; their Underſtanding being like a feeble Glimmering Taper, that ſerveth only to *ſhew* the diſmal Scene, and to render the Horrors *viſible*.

Some of theſe, during the Time that their rational Faculties are darkened with the Fumes of Melancholy, ſhall be haunted with *blaſphemous Thoughts*, which, they complain, they cannot get rid of: Never conſidering, that *our* Thoughts are no farther *ours*, than as we *chuſe* them; that all *Sin* lyes in the *Will*, and all *Will* implies *Choice*: That thoſe Thoughts therefore, which are not *our* Choice, which we reject with a ſettled *Averſion* and *Abhorrence*, will never be placed to *our* Account. Men, under this Depreſſion and Deſpondency, ſhould with a manly determinate Reſolution rouſe themſelves from their Lethargy, and apply themſelves with Vigour to ſome Employment, which may fill the Capacity of their Minds; or they muſt have recourſe to Company, innocent Diverſions, or Exerciſe, which may lull their unquiet Thoughts aſleep, and put their Animal Spirits into pleaſing and agreeable Motions.

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In the fourth Place, *angry Thoughts* fall under our Conſideration. And here, there are three Things to be conſidered. 1*ſt*, The *Paſſion* of *Anger*. 2*dly*, The *firſt Starts* and *Sallies* of this Paſſion: And laſtly, the *deliberate* and *ſettled Conſent* of the *Will* to them. It is impoſſible entirely to root out the Paſſion of Anger, it being interwoven in our Nature; nor is it always in our Power to prevent the firſt Sallies and Starts of it—thoſe *primary* Motions of the Mind; though we may go a great Way towards it, by keeping a *conſtant Guard* over ourſelves, and by inuring the Mind to an habitual State of Recollection. But ſtill we are inveſted with a Power to *with-hold* the determinate *Conſent* of the *Will* to theſe *primary Motions*: We may lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree, and quell them at their firſt Inſurrection; we may uſe the like Expedient as *Cæſar* did, which was to repeat the Letters of the *Greek* Alphabet to himſelf, as ſoon as Paſſion began to ferment: Or we may counterbalance *one* Paſſion by *another*, and may turn their Artillery upon themſelves: We may call in our *Fear* to ſubdue our Anger. SER. IX.

So far then as our Thoughts are involuntary,

Ser. IX. luntary, ſo far they are not ſinful. After all our Endeavours to dreſs the little Garden of the Mind, ill Thoughts, like Weeds, will ſpring up; they are the native Produce of the Soil: But if we take Care to root them up, as faſt as poſſible, as well as to cultivate and cheriſh each generous and beautiful Plant; this is all that God requires of us.

The Mind is *paſſive* in receiving it's Notices of Things, whether *pure* or *impure*; but it is *active* in it's Determination, whether to *harbour* or *diſcard* them. As far as it is *paſſive*, it is entirely innocent; as far as it is *active*, it is accountable; and *it* certainly *is active*, when we *dwell upon impure Thoughts* with Complacency; when we *ſtrengthen* ourſelves in Wickedneſs, by *cheriſhing* the *Remembrance* of paſt guilty Joys, and laying Scenes in our Imagination, for the Entertainment of *future Pleaſures*. The Soul takes in Ideas of *all* Kinds, like the Net in Scripture that gathered of *every Kind*: But then the *Judgment* is *active* in *ſorting* them; in *putting the Good*, as it were, *into Veſſels*, and *caſting the bad away*. Here the Mind can exerciſe it's inviſible Empire: It can, in moſt Caſes, ſay to

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one Idea, *go, and it goeth*; and to another, *come, and it cometh:* As well as to the Organs of the Body, *do this, and he doeth it.* For Inſtance, out of that Variety of Objects which preſent themſelves, it can ſingle out for a more particular and diſtinct View the following ones, *viz.* eternal Happineſs or Miſery; that all-knowing Being, who is the Witneſs of our Actions *here*, who will be the Judge of them at the *laſt* Day, and the Rewarder or Puniſher of them to all *Eternity*. We can inure ourſelves to ſuch Conſiderations (every Evening as we lye down, and every Morning as we riſe up) till our Spirits almoſt mechanically run in the ſame beaten Track: Till our Thoughts almoſt as naturally flow in the ſame pure, unſullied Current, to which they have been habituated; as a River does in the Channel, to which it has been long accuſtomed. They muſt know little of human Nature, and the Workings of their own Minds, who do not obſerve that the Train of their Thoughts, and Motions of their Souls, depend almoſt as much upon Cuſtom, as the Motions of their Bodies do.

If a Man fixes his Thoughts, for Example, upon Money, and turns in his Head all

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all the Ways and Means of having his Portion in this Life, his Soul, his groveling Soul, will *cleave* to the *Duſt:* If he fixes his Thoughts deliberately and ſeriouſly, [Morning and Evening] upon the immortal Welfare of his Soul, it will ſtedfaſtly *cleave* unto *God.*

Only take this along with you, that good Thoughts muſt not juſt *paſs* through the Mind, like *a Gueſt that tarrieth but an Hour:* No; they muſt *dwell* there, till our *Hearts* be pierced with a feeling Senſe of them, as well as our *Heads* convinced of the Truth and Importance of them. Good Thoughts will not court our Acquaintance, and make the firſt Advances to us: But if we often *read* and meditate on religious Subjects, if we, at ſtated Hours, invite them to come and make their Abode with us, they will at laſt come of themſelves, without waiting for the Formality of a ſet Invitation. Religion deeply imbibed, like profound Knowledge, muſt be the Offſpring of Silence, unbroken Meditations, and oft repeated Thoughts. Thus, and thus only, God will reign in the *little* World within us, as he does in the *great* World, Supreme, *over all bleſſed for evermore*, and

evermore

evermore bleſſing us: Our Hearts will be a little Heaven, where the Deity rules enthroned and uppermoſt, with an unrivalled Influence; each Paſſion, like *Wind and Storm, fulfilling his Word.*

But farther the Soul has a Power lodged in itſelf to with-hold it's Approbation, when a ſenſible Object is preſented; till it has examined, whether *all things conſidered*, upon the Balance of the Account, it be for it's *Good in the Whole*, or no. We can as well *ſuſpend our* Judgment, till we have got *moral Evidence*, that ſuch an apparent Good will *really* conduce to our Happineſs; as we can *ſtand ſtill*, when we are not aſſured, that ſuch a *Path* leads to our *Journey*'s End: "Our *mature Exami-*
"*nation* is the *conſulting of a Guide*; the "Determination of the Will thereupon, is "the *following* of that Guide*." Here then we ſee, in what the Government of our Thoughts *conſiſts*: They are not *criminal*, till they have the *Conſent of the Will*; and the Soul can with-hold that *Conſent*, till it has *ſufficiently* conſidered the whole Caſe: Otherwiſe we ſhould have no more Remorſe for willing and acting upon a raſh and

* *Locke*'s Works. Vol. I. Page 112.

SERM. IX. precipitate Judgment; than we ſhould condemn a Stone for falling, or Fire for burning: For we could never have any Compunction of Conſcience for that, which we were ſenſible we could not help. The Will then cannot be irreſiſtibly enſlaved by any *finite* Gratification, becauſe it may ſtill think of a *greater*; and, allowing *that* it's juſt Weight, give it the Aſcendant over the *leſſer*. We may habituate ourſelves to the Contemplation of the *greateſt* Good, and then leſſer Delights will ſhine with a diminiſhed Luſtre, or rather *have no Glory*, by reaſon of the *Glory that excelleth*.

Our Ideas are of no Manner of Service, when they lye as it were in *Heaps* in our Mind, *huddled* and confuſed: We muſt *draw* them *out* and *unfold* them, before we can put them to Uſe. Thus, for Inſtance, the Conſideration, that there is a God, is a great Reſtraint from Sin: But it is not this Thought in the *Groſs* only: The Idea muſt be *opened* and unravelled, and what is contained in it laid diſtinctly and in Order before us, to make it an effectual Preſervative againſt Vice: As that He, who made and upholds every Being, muſt be intimately preſent to every Thing; that a Being

Being infinitely holy muſt deteſt Vice; a Being infinitely juſt muſt puniſh it; that when we do ill, we forfeit his Favour, who can overcaſt the Soul with a Gloom of Horror and the very Blackneſs of Darkgeſs, or brighten it up with the Fulneſs of Bliſs and Glory:—that *of* Him we and all Things are, as our Creator; *through* Him we and all Things continue, as our Preſerver; and *to* Him all, that we *are*, is to be aſcribed; and all that we can *do*, is but our bounden Duty. SERM. IX.

If it be poſſible for a Man to *ſin* with ſuch clear, open and explicit Notices of God, appearing, without any Reſerve, in their full Strength to his Mind; it will be impoſſible for him to *repent:* For Repentance is owing to the Recollection of ſuch Thoughts as theſe, to the rallying thoſe Forces of the Mind, which were put into ſuch Diſorder and Confuſion, that they could do no Service, by the Onſet of ſome Paſſion.

I have here anticipated ſome Things, which fall more properly under my Second Head; becauſe in ſhewing what Power we have over our Thoughts, it was neceſſary to conſider what Power we had, if we obſerved certain Rules.

SERM. IX. II. I proceed now more particularly to lay down ſome Rules for the Conduct of our Thoughts.

In the *1ſt* Place, we muſt not give too much into light Amuſements. Vagrant, diſorderly, ungoverned Thoughts are as naturally the Reſult of a playing, viſiting, wandering Life; as a commanding Reaſon and well-diſciplined Thoughts are the Reſult of Watchfulneſs, frequent Meditation and Recollection. It is an evident and acknowledged Truth, that Senſuality is deſtructive of true Piety: But I believe, that a continued Succeſſion of Diverſions, and an impertinent Courſe of Life, will as effectually take off all religious Impreſſions, as even Senſuality itſelf: Becauſe the Mind is ſo narrowed by confining itſelf to a poor Set of low, little, childiſh Notions; that it cannot, in Proceſs of Time, open wide enough to admit ſuch grand and auguſt Objects, as thoſe of God and a bleſſed Immortality.

The Mind, by being fixed on Trifles, is diſabled and indiſpoſed for greater and more important Buſineſs: Hence a Soul giddy with ſilly Joys, or burdened with imaginary Cares. It is the ſame Thing, whether the

the good *Seed* is ſunk in *Mud*, in Gluttony and Intemperance; or it is burnt up by the *Heat* of the *Sun*, by the Brightneſs and Gaiety of what we call a genteel Life. SERM. IX.

What a ſhocking Thing it is to ſee Creatures, who have Families to take Care of, or, at leaſt, their own Souls to ſave, doing little or nothing, but *eating and drinking, and then riſing up to play*; while their Minds are agitated alternately by the Hopes of Winning, or the Fear of loſing! Each liberal Sentiment and every other Paſſion is ſuſpended, to give Way to the Exerciſe of, the moſt illiberal and ſordid of all the Paſſions, the Deſire of Gain. This Diverſion is, one would think, the Device of thoſe who cannot ſhine in Converſation, to put themſelves upon a Level with thoſe that can. In lieu therefore of Converſation, they have ſubſtituted this Amuſement, than which nothing, except their own Converſation, can be more inſipid. And if this were the Deſign of thoſe who have as little to *ſay*, as they have to *do*; they have effectually compaſſed their Ends; there being no Room for uſeful Reflection, no Place for good Senſe to inſtruct, or Wit to entertain the Company; all Diſtinction between Po-

SERM. IX. verty of Thought and a rich Fund of Knowledge, where this has no Opportunity to diſplay, nor that to expoſe itſelf, being loſt and confounded: And when they retire home, they have this comfortable Reflection to make; that a Soul, capable of enlarging it's Stock of Ideas, and improving it's Love of Virtue, has, for a conſiderable Time, been converſant with no Ideas, but thoſe which were exactly ſuited to the Capacity and Taſte of a Child. The Mind is enlarged or contracted, juſt as the Objects, upon which it chuſes to dwell and is moſt familiar with, are great or little.

Diverſions, however innocent in themſelves, may be very injurious in their Conſequences; becauſe they deſtroy a Greatneſs and Manlineſs of Soul, and occaſion that unſettled Levity of Temper, which expoſes us to the Inroad of Temptations, and makes us ſuſceptible of bad Impreſſions. A determinate Steadineſs of Mind being once loſt, which is the *Anchor* of the Soul; ſhe becomes the Sport of Paſſions, and is carried away with every Wind.

2*dly*, We muſt avoid the reading of bad Books. For it is certain, that as good Books adorn the Mind with the Treaſures of good Senſe

Senſe and beneficial Knowledge; ill ones must ſtore it with a Fund of impure and immodeſt Ideas. Thus many Plays, inſtead of ennobling the Soul with generous Sentiments, ſully the Imagination, by deſcribing Luſt with all it's Incentives and Allurements, and awaken thoſe Paſſions which lay dormant before. If we ſay, we read them for their Wit, and not for their Impurity, it may be true; but then it ought to be conſidered, that the Poiſon of Vice never goes more glibly down, than when Wit is made the Vehicle to convey it. It is granted, that good Writers make the deeper Impreſſion, when they make their Court to the Fancy by bribing it with agreeable Metaphors, Paintings, and lively Imagery: becauſe the Soul being obliged to uſe the Miniſtry of the Senſes, if we would gain an Acceſs to, and procure an Audience from the Soul, their Sovereign; we muſt firſt addreſs ourſelves to the Senſes, as we do to other Miniſters. Muſt not therefore impure Ideas, as well as virtuous ones, find an eaſier Admittance to the Mind, and meet with a more favourable Reception, when they come recommended by the agreeable Dreſs of Wit; eſpecially if we conſider the SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. inbred Corruptions of the Heart, and that they have a ſtrong Party within? Spritely Sallies of the Imagination, the Heightnings of Poetry, and artful Turns of Thought, dazzle the Mind, and hinder it from conſidering the Deformity of the Vice which they inſinuate. The more *beautiful* any Genius is; the more Injury it does, when it is *proſtituted* to Lewdneſs. But theſe Writings are more eſpecially baneful to young, raw, and unfurniſhed Minds; like Poiſon, which always operates the moſt powerfully upon an empty Stomach. And perhaps the Difficulties, which ſome People are obliged to conflict with upon the Account of their Virtue, would not have been ſo great; if it had not been, in ſome Meaſure, blaſted in the Bud by ſome of thoſe looſe Authors, with whom this Nation abounds more than perhaps any other.

I would not be thought to paſs a general, undiſtinguiſhing Cenſure upon *all* Plays: Some of them are rational and manly Entertainments, and may be read with Improvement, as well as Delight. As for the reſt, I would offer it to the Conſideration of virtuous Perſons, whether it be conſiſtent with their Character, as ſuch, to read in the

the *Cloſet*, or hear on the *Stage*, ſuch lewd and immodeſt Sentiments, as it would not be conſiſtent with Modeſty to hear or utter in private *Converſation?* Whether moſt Plays are not full of ſuch groſs Ideas and impure Speeches, as a modeſt Perſon would think himſelf obliged to reſent, if addreſſed to him in Company? Add to this, that thoſe, who lay themſelves out in peruſing Books addreſſed wholly to the Imagination, will look upon every other Compoſition, as dry, jejune, and taſteleſs: Juſt as thoſe, who are accuſtomed to high ſeaſoned Delicacies, which inflame the Blood; have a Diſtaſte for plain and ſimple Food, however nouriſhing and wholeſom. SERM. IX.

3*dly*, Call in other Ideas to your Aid, as ſoon as ever any Paſſion begins to ferment: For you break the Force of any one Idea, however ſtrong and importunate, by ſummoning in others. One violent Paſſion does, for a Time, engroſs the whole *Brute*; becauſe Brutes have *not* a *Command* over their paſt *Perceptions*, ſo as to aſſemble them, when they *pleaſe*: And hence their Rage, or their Grief, or their Luſt, is *genuine* and *unmixed*, without any Check or Reſtraint upon it from a Power of *reflecting* upon

SERM. IX. upon *ſomething elſe*. And if one Paſſion engroſſes the whole *Man*, he ſo far *degenerates* into a Brute: For, from this *Power* over our Ideas, which Brutes have not, we are *ſtiled* reaſonable Creatures; and, by the *Exerciſe* of this Power, we become in *Fact* ſo. We muſt then *immediately*, upon any Temptation, ſtrive to turn our Thoughts into another Channel. I have already mentioned the Example of an *Heathen*: here I ſhall recommend that of a *Chriſtian* Emperor, who conſtantly, upon ſuch Occaſions, ſaid to himſelf the Lord's Prayer, leſt he ſhould be overſet by any ſudden Guſt of Paſſion, before he had time to call in the Succours of mighty Reaſon, and almighty Grace. Or, as Novelty may have ſometimes a greater Effect, than what is familiar to us; we may, for Variety, ſubſtitute in the Room of it, this or any other Prayer, which, by Reaſon of it's Shortneſs, may eaſily be remembred: "O God, may thy Mercy pardon what I "have been! May thy Grace reform what "I am! And may thy Wiſdom direct "what I ſhall be!

When we obſerve in ourſelves the leaſt Approaches towards *Anger*, Luſt, Envy,

and Diſcontent: we are not to put off our Application to God for his Grace, to ſome prefixed *Diſtance* of Time: No, we ſhould *forthwith* deſire his Aſſiſtance, and pray for the Succours of his holy Spirit. For by immediately recollecting ourſelves, and deſiring his Aſſiſtance upon the firſt Solicitation of any Vice, which we may do ſilently in public as well as in private, in a Crowd as well as in our Cloſet; we ſtop the Progreſs of Evil, by introducing another Train of Thinking: Whereas by delaying our Addreſſes till the ſtated Periods of Prayer return, we let the Poiſon work in us, without applying the proper Antidote in Time. No Doubt, Morning and Evening Prayers are indiſpenſable Duties; and ſome *Part* of our Time ought every Day to be dedicated to God, as an *Acknowledgment* that the *whole* of our Time is his Gift. But we ought to take Care, that our *formal* Petitions do not ſuperſede our *habitual* and conſtant Endeavours. And if we would know the Reaſon why ſome, who are conſtant to their Devotions, yet are as envious, cenſorious, fretful, and impatient as others; it is, becauſe they uſe Religion merely as an *occaſional*, *formal*, *ſet* SERM. IX.

SERM. IX

ſet Thing; but never *habitually* apply it to the common Occurrences of Life. They put it on like ſome particular Dreſs, at ſet Times, and on ſome Occaſions; and then lay it aſide again for the reſt of the Week. On the other Hand, if upon the firſt Motions towards Anger, Impatience, Uncharitableneſs, *&c.* they without Delay, upon the Spot, prayed to God, and invoked his Aid; this would be, upon every Incident, an Expedient to expel bad Thoughts, before they had gotten full Poſſeſſion of the Heart, by bringing others more worthy into their Room. We muſt feel, if we are attentive, the Diſorders of the Mind, as well as the Diſtempers of the Body. We muſt know, when any Glance of Ill-Nature, Luſt, or Diſcontent, comes acroſs our Minds: And to turn our Thoughts to God, upon that emergent Occaſion, by a mental Prayer, is inſtantly to withdraw the Mind from Evil, to retract the bad Deſign, before it has made any Advances in our Hearts, and to endeavour after the oppoſite Virtue. Whatever Methods we take to govern our unruly Thoughts, we muſt employ them, when they *firſt* take up Arms. We muſt before Paſſion makes Head, and becomes

becomes formidable, recollect ſuch Thoughts as theſe: "How often have my *ſecond* cool-"er Thoughts diſapproved, what my *firſt* "Apprehenſion of Things, upon a ſudden "Provocation, have ſuggeſted? When "Storms ariſe in my Breaſt, I will wait "for the *ſecond ſurer* Report, which my "Judgment ſhall bring in, for the ſtill "ſmall Voice of Reaſon." SERM. IX.

4*thly*, We muſt often deſcend into ourſelves. Some are, in a bad Senſe, moſt buſy, when and where they have nothing to do: We too, in another Senſe, muſt be moſt buſy, when, in the Language of the *World*, we have nothing to do; but, in the Language of *Reaſon* and *Chriſtianity*, have our eternal Salvation to *work out with Fear and Trembling*. We muſt aſk our Hearts the following Queſtions. "Tell me truly, O my "Conſcience, am I really better than "other Men? Or am I a more artful "Hypocrite? Am I not like an Actor, "who may chuſe perhaps to ſuſtain the "Character of a Saint or ſome worthy "Man on the Theatre, before the Eyes "of the Public; but, when withdrawn "behind the Scenes, is upon a Level with "thoſe who acted the Parts of a Villain or

SERM. IX. " an abandoned Debauchee? Am I intrin-
" ſically good, good through a Principle
" of obeying and pleaſing my Maker?
" Or do I only ſtudy to ſave Appearances
" with Regard to the World? Inſtead of
" waſting my Time in thoſe Follies, which
" fill the Circle of an uſeleſs Life, do I
" grow wiſer, humbler, and meeker, as
" I increaſe in Years? Or is the Heat
" and Paſſion of Youth only ſucceeded
" by the Peeviſhneſs of a more advanced
" Age; like Wine fermenting when it is
" new, and growing ſour and eager when
" it is drawn to the Dregs?"

Without ſuch Queſtions often aſked, and ſeriouſly anſwered, without ſounding the Depth of our Hearts; our Lives will be one univerſal Void, one undiſtinguiſhed Blank, without any Act of ſubſtantial, well-grounded, inward Piety, to fill the Space between the Cradle and the Grave. They will be, what they are often compared to, a Dream indeed, where Caprice and Fancy governs, but Reaſon lies aſleep. We are often enquiring into other People's Concerns: We are induſtrious to know, and glad to communicate, how much ſuch a Man has, how much he expends, and whether

whether his Expences ſuit his Income: But alas! it would be much better for us to turn our Thoughts inwards, and to view the Workings of the Soul. Are we reluctant and unwilling to do it? Then we may take it for granted, there is ſomething amiſs within. For that Life can no more be ſound at the Bottom; than that Religion, which dreads the Teſt of a fair Examination. Fain would I perſuade thoſe, with whom Novelty has ſo great Charms, that they ſpend their Time in little or nothing, but *hearing*, *ſeeing*, or *telling* ſomething *new*, to add yet *one new* Thing *more*, new, I mean, to *them*, *viz. one ſerious Thought* upon the following Queſtion. "What would become "of them, if God ſhould require their "Souls this Night? What, if upon that "Suppoſition they ſhould be finally loſt and "miſcarry for ever? What, if upon that "Suppoſition they are going to give an Ac-"count, before the *greateſt* of Beings, of a "Life, that they cannot reflect upon, even "in *private* and by *themſelves*, without the "utmoſt Shame and Confuſion?" We are, too many of us, at a great Expence of Time, Health, and Fortune: One Expence, however, is neceſſary, an Expence of Thought, and of that we are very ſparing. But

SERM. IX. But this brings me laſtly to mention another Preſervative againſt evil Thoughts, I mean, the Purſuit of Knowledge.

For, in Proportion as our Love for Contemplation increaſes, a Reliſh for criminal Pleaſures will deaden and abate. The more Variety of Knowledge the Mind is enriched with; the more Channels there will be to divert our Thoughts into. When once the Soul, which has a reſtleſs Activity, and muſt be at work, is provided with proper Materials to work upon, when once early Cuſtom has made a rational and ſolid Train of Thinking eaſy to you; you will be comparatively happy, unleſs ſome uncommon Diſaſter befal you, for the remaining Term of your Life. Moſt other Pleaſures, beſides thoſe of Knowledge and Virtue, are either idle Diverſions to ſooth the Soul into a Forgetfulneſs of it's Miſeries, and to make Life paſs away unperceived; or they are tumultuous Joys, which put the Soul into a Ferment, and give it too violent Agitations: But *your* Pleaſures will be the Perfections of human Nature; and yourſelf an Ornament to it. Reading and Thinking will quicken all the ſtill Scenes of Life, and direct you in all the

buſy

buſy Parts of it. Whereas if you neglect this early Culture, you will fall into the *moſt uneaſy* Situation of Mind, that of being *weary* of *yourſelf*, and yet be incapable of reliſhing any Company, but what is as poor and uninſtructive as your own. Your Time will be a Burthen to you, and yourſelf (for ſuch is that Man, who does little or no Good) an uſeleſs Burthen to the Publick. Your Mind, like your Body, came *naked into the World*; and *naked* will it *return*, unenriched with Knowledge, unennobled by Virtue. The Fierceneſs of your Paſſions will indeed, in the Decline of Life, abate and die away: And it is very providential that they do decay. For a weak infirm Body could not bear thoſe violent Tranſports of Paſſion, to which Youth is ſubject: They would be like *new Wine in old Bottles:* The Ferment would be too ſtrong and impetuous for the weak Incloſure; it would burſt through, and deſtroy them. But, though the Paſſions contract themſelves; your Folly will only receive different Modifications, according to the different Stages of Life: And, what was an active vigorous Impertinence in Youth, will be in Age a joyleſs Dulneſs: It is the ſame ſhal-

SERM. IX. low Stream ſtill; only what ran before with an empty Noiſe, will be, in the Winter of your Days, frozen and motionleſs. Of a profligate Youth, an untimely Death or a diſtempered old Age is the neceſſary Conſequence; of a giddy impertinent Youth a frivolous old Age, and all the Childiſhneſs of our former Years, without the Vivacity of them: You muſt have Recourſe to a thouſand Trifles to fill up the mighty Void of Thought, to ſhut out, that importunate Intruder, Self-Reflection, and to keep off that Sullenneſs, which muſt come upon a Mind conſcious of no intrinſick Worth: And when ſome Years, each ſucceeding one more flat and inſipid than the foregoing, are thus ſpent; you can have no Reaſon to wiſh for a longer Continuance in this World, but merely becauſe you dread what will be your Condition in another. Idleneſs will either end in a confirmed Stupidity; or it will break out into an ill-natured Activity, into Spleen, Fretfulneſs, and Impatience; juſt as it meets with a phlegmatic, or a warm Complexion. The Soul, when with-held from it's proper Sphere of Action, either ſettles into a liſtleſs Stagnation; or it preys upon itſelf, and contracts a ranco-

rous Eagerneſs of Spirit, diſſatisfied with itſelf, and out of Humour with every Thing elſe. Buſineſs, on the other Hand, Application and Induſtry will ſhut up all the Avenues to Temptation, fill the Compaſs of our Minds, and exclude thoſe vicious Ideas, which will be laying cloſe Siege, and preſſing for Admittance. SERM. IX.

May God defend us from all Adverſities, which may happen to the Body; and from all evil Thoughts, which may aſſault and hurt the Soul!



SERMON X.

On the Reaſonableſs of Prayer in general, and of public Worſhip.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing inſtant in Prayer.

TO preſerve upon our Minds a Senſe of God, and our Dependance on him, the Apoſtle here recommends conſtant Prayer. SERM. X.

To enforce which Advice, I ſhall

I*ſt*, Shew the Reaſonableneſs and Advantages of Prayer in general.

II*dly*, Of publick Worſhip.

III*dly*, Of Family Prayer.

IV*thly*, Conclude with an Exhortation to Prayer.

I*ſt*, Then I am to ſhew the Reaſonableneſs and Advantages of Prayer in general.

Certainly nothing is more reaſonable, than that we, who *know* *, that *every good and perfect Gift cometh from above*, ſhould *acknowledge*, that it doth ſo by looking up to that Being, *from whom our Help cometh*. Were, indeed, what we receive, a Matter of ſtrict *Debt*; then we might ſay, who is the Lord, that we ſhould pray unto him? But as our Enjoyments are the Effects of his undeſerved Mercy; it becomes us to aſk if we would receive. In a Word, they, that are ſenſible of their Dependance every Moment upon God, ought to perform ſuch Acts as are expreſſive, in the moſt ſignificant Manner, of that Dependance: Now Prayer is the moſt ſignificant and expreſſive of our Dependance upon him: Since not to pray, would imply, that what is conveyed to us was not of free Grace, but a Matter of undiſputed Right.

Again, if Prayer be beneficial to human Nature, God, as a good Creator, muſt neceſſarily deſire the Performance of a Duty, which is for the Good of his Creatures: But, that Prayer is beneficial to human Nature, is evident:

* See Dr. *Clarke*'s Sermons. Vol. IX. Page 437.

Becauſe,

Becauſe, in the firſt Place, it has a Tendency to beget in us thoſe very Graces and Virtues, which we pray for. For what we conſtantly and ſeriouſly pray for, that we ſhall earneſtly deſire; and what we earneſtly deſire, that we ſhall endeavour to attain: Warm Deſires naturally ripen into correſpondent Actions.

Secondly, what can humble the Soul more in Proſperity, than to proſtrate ourſelves before him, *who is clothed with Majeſty and Honour?* Or what can brighten up the Soul more in Adverſity, than to conſider him who is the Almighty *Helper of the Friendleſs?* Nothing is more deeply riveted in human Nature, than a Spirit of Self-Sufficiency and Independency: And nothing is more requiſite to beat down this Spirit, than Prayer, which is the Confeſſion of Inſufficiency in ourſelves, and our Dependance on our Maker. When we are praying, we either do, or ought to conſider ourſelves, as ſo many Malefactors imploring the Mercy of our great Sovereign, *whoſe are the Iſſues of Life and Death:* and what can lower the Pride of Man more, than ſuch a Conſideration?

Thirdly, It is the beſt Expedient to compoſe our Paſſions. We muſt not pretend it is impoſſible to govern our Paſſions. For what we can govern in the Preſence of a King, or any great Man; that we may certainly do by the Conſideration of the Preſence of the King of Kings. And yet it is a melancholy Truth, that Thouſands, who act a Part with great Applauſe on the public Theatre of the World, would not for a great deal, that Mankind ſhould ſee what they act behind the Scenes, when withdrawn from the Eye of the World into Privacy and Retirement. The Misfortune is, we do not habituate ourſelves to a vigorous Senſe of God's Preſence. Now Prayer ſupplies this Defect: It ſets God before us, makes us conſider ourſelves as acting immediately under his All-ſeeing Eye, and poſſeſſes our Minds with a lively Reverence of his tremendous Nature. And to conſider, that a Being, whom *the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*, is *about our Path and about our Bed, and ſpies out all our Ways*; that he, *in whom we live and move, and have our Being*, muſt be nearer to the Soul than any Object whatever; and that therefore, in a much nobler Senſe than this Say-

ing was uſed formerly, " we are never leſs " alone, than we are thus alone," holding an Intercourſe, and walking with God; is a Thought enough to rouſe the moſt indolent, and fix the moſt unſteady. If it be ſaid, that Meditation on God, which ſome would ſubſtitute in the Room of Prayer, would anſwer the ſame End; I reply, that to addreſs ourſelves, and preſent our Petitions to a Perſon reſpectable for his Worth and Dignity, much more to him, who is infinitely better entitled to a Reverential Fear, than all the World beſides, muſt in the Nature of the Thing ſtrike the Soul more forcibly, and awe the Paſſions into a ſerene Compoſure; than merely to contemplate his Goodneſs, or entertain the moſt *raiſed* Thoughts of him: Not to mention, that Prayer is, what Meditation is not, an actual Exerciſe of the Virtue of Humility and Truſt in God, and an Acknowledgment of our Dependance on Him. SERM. X.

Fourthly, Prayer is highly uſeful to beget and cheriſh in us an univerſal Benevolence. Whenever we have any Difference with a Neighbour, let us, inſtead of indulging little ſpiteful Reflections, fall on our Knees, and pray for him with a ſerious Recollection

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collection of Mind, begging that God would adjuſt his Supplies to his Neceſſities, protect him with his Power, direct him by his Wiſdom, and crown him with Mercy and Loving Kindneſs: After ſuch particular, earneſt and repeated Applications to the Throne of Grace, we ſhould find all ill-natured and cankered Paſſions die away: and a tender ſympathizing Temper, a flowing Humanity, and a liberal Open-heartedneſs ſucceed in their Room. We ſhall think no Inſtance of common Civility too great to be ſhewn to him, for whom we ſincerely and conſtantly deſired eternal Happineſs. And to this univerſal Interceſſion for their bittereſt Foes and for all Mankind, which was the conſtant Practice of the primitive Chriſtians, perhaps it was owing, that whenever the Plague raged in any of the moſt populous Cities, ſuch as *Rome*, *Alexandria*, &c. they ſent Supplies to relieve the Neceſſities, and adminiſtered Medicines to cure the Diſeaſes even of their Perſecutors. While their Friends and Relations forſook them and fled; the Chriſtians ſtood their Ground, and endeavoured to ſave the Lives of their Enemies at the Hazard of their own. We could not be guilty

guilty of any unkind, angry, peeviſh Behaviour to him in public; for whoſe ſpiritual and temporal Welfare we daily, ſeriouſly, and affectionately put up our Prayers in private: to pour forth the Overflowings of a benevolent Heart towards any Man in Prayer to God for him; and to vent the Overflowings of our Gall in Company againſt him, being as incompatible as Light and Darkneſs. Thoſe generous Sentiments, to which we had habituated the Mind by the ſtated Hours of Devotion, would open and enlarge the Mind with the moſt animated and impartial Good-will, would free us from all Rancour to our Foes, all partial Attachments to our Friends, and all Indifference to the reſt of Mankind; would gain Admittance for an extenſive Charity, where it was before a Stranger, and cultivate it's Intereſts, where it was already a well received Gueſt. To offer up our Prayers for all Mankind daily to him, who is the univerſal Parent of Mankind, is Benevolence, as well as Devotion, put in Practice every Day. SERM. X.

Every Vice is checked and every Virtue kept alive by a fixed awakened Senſe of the Deity, by a due Regard for, and Fear of him.

Now

SERM. X. Now conſtant attentive Prayer beſt preſerves this Regard and Reverence for an inviſible Being; juſt as a conſtant Correſpondence cheriſhes the affectionate Remembrance of an abſent Friend, and revives thoſe Impreſſions, which Length of Time would wear out and deface. God therefore grants our Petitions, not merely becauſe we *pray*; but becauſe Prayer, attentive Prayer, though it does not make him more *willing* to *beſtow*, makes us *fitter* and more *qualified* Subjects to *receive*, the Emanations of his Favour. It is true, God will grant us what is fit; but then it is as true, that it is not fit he ſhould proſtitute his Favours upon thoſe, who will not pray for them with an humble Senſe of their Dependance, and receive them with a grateful Senſe of his Goodneſs. We do not pretend that the Deity is altered by our Prayers; but that the Relation which we bear to the Deity is ſo, when from irreligious and indevout Sinners we commence ſincere Votaries of Religion. God, who *accepteth according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, will not reject the poor weak Efforts of an indigent dependent Being, willing to expreſs, in the beſt Manner he

he can, the Notices he has upon his Mind of the divine Excellency; yet unable to perform any Act of Adoration, which bears the leaſt Proportion to his Greatneſs. And he, who *dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*, delighteth to dwell in, a much *nobler* Temple, that of an humble and contrite Spirit. SERM. X.

Add to theſe Arguments that Prayer is exemplified in our Saviour's Life, inculcated in his Precepts, and enforced by this ſtrong Motive, that he will give his holy Spirit to them that aſk him. And it is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that a Being always benevolent to us, always intimately preſent with us, will not be wanting in the gracious Aſſiſtances of his Spirit to that Soul, which is not wanting to itſelf in humble Addreſſes joined with it's own vigorous Endeavours. And Vice is perhaps nothing, but the ſmothering and ſtifling the Beams of divine Grace; as Blackneſs is nothing, but the abſorbing and ſuffocating the Rays of Light.

It would be ridiculous to deny the Operations of the holy Spirit, becauſe we are not ſenſible of them, and do not know, how God actuates the Soul. We ought rather to reaſon thus: We know, that we have

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have been *holden up by God ever ſince we were born*; but yet have not an intimate Conſciouſneſs and Feeling of that Influence, by which he ſupports us, or any Knowledge, how he upholds our Exiſtence: Juſt ſo we prove from Scripture, that he conveys his Grace to us, but are Strangers to the Manner in which he diſpenſes it. We no more can have our ſpiritual Life, than we have our natural Life independently of God's Aſſiſtance, and are equally in the dark as to the Conveyance of either. It is no Objection to this Doctrine, that, as an ingenious Writer * expreſſeth it, "the "Powers of Nature and the Influences of "Grace are ſo blended within us, that we "cannot eaſily unravel them. For no more "can we, in all Caſes, preciſely diſtinguiſh "our foreign Acquirements from our origi-"nal Selves." We can no more exactly determine in every Point what is natural to us, and what is acquired by us, than we can what is the Reſult of our own Endeavours, and what is the Operation of God's Spirit. Thoſe who diſbelieve the Aſſiſtances of divine Grace, becauſe they have not an inward Senſe of them, ſhould conſider, that

* Mr. *Mudge*'s Sermons.

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an inward and diſtinct Perception of the Motions of God's Spirit, would be inconſiſtent with that Degree of Freedom, which is neceſſary in a State of Probation. Could we trace the inward Workings of the Spirit, it would lay too great a Reſtraint upon us, and overpower the Will. We ſhould no more dare to ſin, when we clearly and diſtinctly perceived the divine Spirit checking us, with the moſt awakening Notices, in a ſenſible Manner; than we ſhould, if God himſelf were to appear to us in ſome viſible Symbol of his Glory. Such a glaring Evidence of the divine Preſence in us, as it is contrary to his common and uniform Method of acting, would be too overbearing and irreſiſtible. It was neceſſary therefore, that we ſhould *walk by Faith, and not by Sight: By Faith* grounded upon rational and ſubſtantial Proofs; *not by Sight*, not by any ſenſible Indications of the Spirit dwelling in us, and working diſtinctly from us. SERM. X.

To return from this Digreſſion, the Mind of Man naturally affects Independence: To check this Temper, God has obliged us to aſk for the Aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit; our being obliged to aſk, continually

tinually reminding us of (what we are very apt to forget) the Dependance we have on him for our ſpiritual as well as natural Abilities. What we could receive without petitioning for it, we ſhould look upon as entirely our own Acquiſition, excluſively of our Maker. This ſeems to be the moſt obvious Reaſon, why God has annexed the Promiſes of his Grace to the Performance of this Condition: That Prayer might be a perpetual Memorial of our Reliance on him, calling us to ſuch a State of Humility, that whenever we do *well*, we ſhould in the Words of the Pſalmiſt acknowledge: *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord; but unto thy Name be aſcribed the Glory:* And whenever we do *ill*, we ſhould in the Words of *Daniel* confeſs: *To thee, O Lord, belongeth Righteouſneſs; but unto us Confuſion of Face.*

There is another Argument for Prayer, which muſt not be omitted: We ought to cultivate that Duty, which is the diſtinguiſhing Perfection of our Nature: Now Religion (and by Religion, the Worſhip of God is chiefly intended) ſeems to bid the faireſt for the diſtinguiſhing Perfection of our Nature: Brutes ſhewing ſome Symptoms at leaſt

leaſt of Reaſon in their Actions, though they diſcover none of Religion: Or, to ſpeak more properly, Brutes ſeem to be endowed with Reaſon in a *lower* Degree, as far as it is neceſſary to preſerve themſelves, or to propagate their Kind: But Man alone is ennobled with Reaſon in *ſo high* a Degree, as enables him to lift up his Heart unto God in Prayer, and his Underſtanding in Contemplation. And we ſhould make it our chief Buſineſs to excel the reſt of Mankind in that very Perfection, *viz.* Religion, by which Mankind excel the brute Creation. SERM. X.

Having thus ſhewn the Reaſonableneſs of Prayer in general, I proceed

II*dly*, To that of publick Worſhip.

1*ſt*, God is to be regarded as the univerſal Benefactor of Mankind from whom we all have received publick *Bleſſings*, and to whom therefore we owe publick *Acknowledgments*. For private Praiſes and Thankſgivings are, by no Means, proper Returns for publick Mercies.

2*dly*, Every Creature ought to do Homage to his Creator; he ought to pay the Tribute of Honour, where Honour is due. Now the Honour of God is more promoted

SERM. X. by his being worſhipped publickly, than privately: Becauſe private Prayer is Piety confined within our Breaſts; but publick Prayer is Piety exemplified and diſplayed in our outward Actions: It is *the Beauty of Holineſs* made viſible; our *Light ſhines out before Men*, and in the Eye of the World; it enlarges the Intereſts of Godlineſs, and keeps up a Face and Senſe of Religion among Mankind.

Were Men only to repair to their Devotion, as the Diſciple of Quality did to his Lord and Maſter, ſecretly and by Night for Fear of the *Jews*; Religion thus lonely and unfriended would ſoon decay for want of publick Countenance and Encouragement. For, what would be the Conſequence, if Religion ſought the Shades, and lived a Recluſe entirely immured in Cloſets; while Irreligion audaciouſly appears abroad, *like the Peſtilence that deſtroyeth at Noon Day?* It requires no great Depth of Penetration to perceive, nor Expence of Argument to prove; that the want of a publick national Religion, or a general abſenting from that national Religion, muſt end in a general national Irreverence to the Deity; and an Irreverence to the Deity in an univerſal Diſſolution of Morals, and all *the*

Overflowings of Ungodlineſs. The Service of the Church, and the Word of God read and expounded, muſt awaken thoſe Reflections, which it is the Buſineſs of bad Men to lay faſt aſleep, and let in upon the Soul ſome unwelcome Beams of Light: But, when theſe conſtant Calls to Virtue are neglected; Men will become gradually more and more eſtranged from all Seriouſneſs and Goodneſs; till at laſt they end in a profeſſed Diſregard to all fixed Principles. SERM. X.

The Fear of that Being, whoſe Judgments no Power can fence off, no Skill elude, being abſolutely neceſſary; it is the Duty of every Man, not only to cultivate this Reverence in himſelf, but to promote it as far as he can in others. Now he, that would promote a ſacred Regard to the Deity, muſt do it by ſuch Actions, as are moſt ſignificant of that Regard: He muſt expreſs and exemplify to others, that awful ſerious Senſe of the Deity, which is impreſt upon his own Mind, by a ſolemn and avowed Acknowledgment of his Power and Glory in Aſſemblies ſet apart for that Purpoſe. Whoever thinks juſtly, muſt be ſenſible, that *private* Religion never *did* in *Fact* ſubſiſt; but where ſome *publick* Pro-

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feſſion of it was regularly kept up: He muſt be ſenſible, that if publick Worſhip were once diſcontinued, an univerſal Forgetfulneſs of that God would enſue, whom to remember is the ſtrongeſt Fence and Preſervative againſt Vice: And that the Bulk of Mankind would ſoon degenerate into mere Savages and Barbarians, if there were not ſtated Days to call them off from the *common* Buſineſs of Life, to attend to what is the *moſt* important Buſineſs of all, their *Salvation* in the next.

But I need not labour this Point: Since it is allowed even by thoſe who are declared Enemies to Religion. They look upon Religion, and publick Worſhip, as a political Engine, to awe the common Herd into a Senſe of their Duty, not founded on Reaſon, yet neceſſary to the Good of Mankind. How abſurd this Scheme is, may eaſily be ſhewn. For if they do not admit the Exiſtence of the Deity; they may be, without much Difficulty, confuted; the Exiſtence of God being one of the moſt obvious Truths. But if they do admit it; they muſt grant likewiſe, that an infinitely good Being muſt will, whatever is for the Good of his Creatures; and conſequently

conſequently Religion and publick Worſhip, which they own to be conducive to the Good of Mankind, muſt be his Will: But, what is the Will of the Deity, muſt be founded on Truth and Reaſon. What is *neceſſary* to the *publick* Happineſs, is *therefore* true. For though our *private* Intereſt and Truth may not alway coincide; yet there is alway a ſtrict Correſpondence, Harmony, and Alliance, between Truth and the *general* Happineſs. SERM. X.

Religion being once ſet aſide; there will be nothing left to reſtrain the better Sort, but a Fear of Shame and Diſgrace; and nothing to reſtrain the lower Sort, but the Dread of temporal Puniſhments; which yet will be of little Avail. For he who is weary of Life, who wants to lay it down as a Burthen, may command yours, or mine, or any Body's elſe. And what ſhould hinder him? The Fear of the World to come? That will be out of the Queſtion, when once a Senſe of Religion is extinct. The Fear of this World, of an ignominious or a lingering Death? Alas! Temporal Puniſhments derive their chief Efficacy from the Dread of divine Vengeance. For, without that, a Man may evade them, by be-

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ing his own Executioner. There are a thouſand Avenues to Death; and though the Vigilance of the Magiſtrate may ſecure ſome of them; yet others will ſtand open to receive the determined and reſolved, and place them beyond the Reach of the impotent Power of their Fellow-Creatures. To deſtroy Religion therefore, is to let looſe the wretched and the deſperate (a formidable Body) upon the eaſy, affluent and the happy. One would not chuſe to live in a World, which has no Notion or Belief of another. For however advantageous one's Circumſtances may be, we ſhould lye at the Mercy of thoſe, who deſpair of bettering their own, but by Violence or Fraud: There being nothing in this Life to check that Man, to whom Life itſelf, as it is circumſtanced, is an inſupportable Load.

We may obſerve, that a Diſregard to all Authority is the diſtinguiſhing Character of the Age: Children are undutiful to Parents, Servants are diſobedient to their Maſters, and Subjects to thoſe that are ſet over them. And can they wonder at it, who ſeldom or never recognize, in the moſt open and conſpicuous Manner, the Authority of that Being, in whom all Authority, in the laſt

Link

Link of the Chain, terminates; and from whom it muſt be derived to Governors, Parents and Maſters? An abandoned Profaneneſs, Diſſoluteneſs and Debauchery in the lower Sort of People are too often owing to that thorough Contempt of Principle, which reigns among Thoſe, that are called the better Sort; who, by neglecting the public Obſervance of Religion, have, in ſome Meaſure, deſtroyed the publick Regard to it; who, frequent at every other Aſſembly, forſake only one Aſſembly, *the aſſembling themſelves together* in a religious Manner. Indeed a Senſe of Decency contracted by converſing with the well-bred Part of Mankind may give a ſuperficial Poliſh to their Manners, and an Elegance of Thinking may create an Abhorrence of any groſs, ſhocking and beaſtly Exceſſes. But the Vulgar, who learn from their Example to have no Fear of God before their Eyes, but are Strangers to delicate Ideas, will plunge at once into the loweſt Sink of Vice: *Sin* in them will appear *exceeding ſinful*, in it's genuine Deformity, without any Veil thrown over it. Things are already brought to that Paſs, that it is a Queſtion, whether the Vices of ſome in the loweſt Claſs of Mankind are a SERM. X.

greater Object of our Hatred and Deteſtation; or their Poverty, ſometimes the Effect of thoſe Vices, of our Pity and Compaſſion.

It is too *flagrant* a Truth to be *concealed*, and too *melancholy* a one to be *told* with *Pleaſure*, that a faſhionable Indifference to every Thing ſerious and ſacred has obtained eſpecially among thoſe, from whom one might expect better Things; and from thence, as all Faſhions do, has deſcended to the meaner Sort. And whoever would trace the univerſal Depravation of Morals up to it's Fountain-Head; muſt, I believe, reſolve it into that glaring Contempt of natural and revealed Religion, which has prevailed among Perſons of Rank and Figure. Inferiors are proud to form themſelves upon the Model of their Superiors *: And when, thoſe,

* L. Lucullus ferebatur quam commodiſſime reſpondiſſe, cum eſſet objecta magnificentia villæ Tuſculanæ, duo ſe habere vicinos, ſuperiorem, equitem Romanum; inferiorem, libertinum; quorum cum eſſent magnificæ villæ, ſibi concedi oportere, quod iis, qui inferioris ordinis eſſent, liceret. Non vides, Luculle, à te id ipſum natum, ut illi cuperent, quibus id, ſi tu non faceres, non liceret?—Quis non frangeret eorum libidines, niſi illi ipſi, qui eas frangere deberent, ejuſdem cupiditatis tenerentur? Nec enim tantum mali eſt peccare principes, (quanquam eſt magnum hoc per

thoſe, who are bound by all the Ties of Gratitude to that God, who *giveth them all Things richly to enjoy*, to advance the Intereſts of Religion, and enlarge it's Empire, ſtamp a Credit upon Vice and Irreligion; when thoſe who, as they move in a higher Sphere, ought to be the great Luminaries of the World, ceaſe to diſpenſe a ſalutary Influence: The Diſſolution of the *moral* World is as much to be expected; as the End of the *natural* World will be, when *the Sun ſhall withdraw it's Shining, the Moon be turned into Blood, and the Stars fall from Heaven.* SERM. X.

In a Word, public Worſhip is the great Inſtrument of ſecuring a Senſe of God's Providence and of a World to come; and a Senſe of God's Providence and a World to come is the great Baſis of all ſocial and private Duties.

Hitherto I have argued the Point merely upon the Foot of *natural* Reaſon. Before I diſmiſs this Head, it may not be im-

per ſe ipſum malum) quantum illud, quod permulti imitatores principum exiſtunt.—Non ſolum vitia concipiunt ipſi, ſed ea infundunt in civitatem; neque ſolum obſunt, quod ipſi corrumpuntur, ſed etiam quod corrumpunt, pluſque exemplo quam peccato nocent.

Cicero de Legibus, Lib. tertius, Pag. 219. &c. Editio Davis.

SERM. X. proper to ſhew what Obligations we have to this Duty, as *Chriſtians.* The ſame Reaſons, that oblige us to be *admitted* into the Church by Baptiſm, lay us under a Neceſſity of *continuing* in a conſtant *Communion* with it. For by forſaking this Communion, we forfeit thoſe Privileges, to which our Admiſſion into the Church gave us a Title. The Church is called *the Body of Chriſt*; and a Member, when cut off from the Body, muſt loſe thoſe vital Influences, which were imparted to it from the Head; *as not holding the Head, from which all the Body, by Joints and Bands, having Nouriſhment miniſtred, and knit together, increaſeth with the Increaſe of God.* Our Saviour erected a viſible Society, into which all Chriſtians are to be embodied: *And he gave,* beſides ſome extraordinary Officers, *Paſtors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the* EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST; *that we may grow up unto Him in all Things, who is the Head, even Chriſt: From whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every Joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual Working of the Meaſure of every Part, maketh*

maketh Increaſe unto the edifying of itſelf SERM. X.
in Love.

From which Words we may fairly infer, that by deſerting the Church, the *Body* of Chriſt, we cut ourſelves off from all *Union* with him, who is the *Head* of it; and conſequently, whatever Pretences to Morality we may make, from all thoſe *Graces* and *Benefits*, here and hereafter, which are to be had by *Virtue* of that *Union* *. *As the Branch cannot bear Fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the Vine; no more can* we, *except we abide in Chriſt.* By refuſing to aſſociate with any Body of Chriſtians, and to partake of thoſe Ordinances, by which we have a Fellowſhip with Chriſt, we relapſe into a State of *Nature*, and have no *covenanted* Title to that Salvation, which is *the Gift of God, through* the Merits of *Jeſus Chriſt.* What was the Senſe of Antiquity upon this Head, a very great Maſter of it † informs us, whoſe Words I ſhall take the Liberty to tranſcribe. " Not one Example of any

* *Iræneus*, Lib. III. Cap. XL. Ubi Eccleſia, ibi et Spiritus Dei.

Cyprianus de unitate Eccleſiæ. Habere jam non poteſt Deum patrem, qui Eccleſiam non habet matrem.

† See Archbiſhop *Potter*'s excellent Diſcourſe on Church Government, Page 28. 3d Edition.

" Chriſtian

" Chriſtian Church can be produced through " the whole World, where the Sacraments " were not adminiſtered, the Goſpel preach- " ed, and the Worſhip of God celebrated " in an open and public Manner. Even in " the ſharpeſt Perſecutions, the Chriſtian " Aſſemblies, though it may not be ſo " openly as in Times of Peace, were con- " ſtantly held and frequented: And who- " ever did not chuſe to endure the *moſt* " *cruel Death*, rather than *preſerve* his " *Life* by *abſenting* himſelf, was thought " unworthy to be called a Chriſtian."

We find that, after our Saviour's Aſcenſion, his Followers *continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles Fellowſhip, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers.* We are commanded *not to forſake the aſſembling* of ourſelves together. Had Chriſtianity been, agreeably to the Notion of a certain Perſon *, *a divine Philoſophy, exiſting in the Mind, without public Worſhip, or any thing that looked like a Church*, it muſt ſoon have expired of itſelf: The internal Relation which we bear to Chriſt would have been forgotten, where there were no publick Obſervances, expreſ-

* *Algernoon Sidney.* See Biſhop *Burnet's Secret Hiſtory*, Vol. I.

ſive

ſive of it, kept up. The Light would have gone out, which was to be kept ſo cloſe, as not to *ſhine out before Men*, by any avowed Profeſſion. But our bleſſed Saviour, by the Settlement of a *viſible* Society, by appointing a ſtanding Miniſtry, and obliging his Diſciples to attend to their Inſtructions, has perpetuated his Religion, and founded it *upon a Rock, againſt which the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail.* SERM. X.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

The Duties of Family and private Prayer, conſidered.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing conſtant in Prayer.

HAving in a former Diſcourſe proved, SERM. XI.
I*ſt*, The Reaſonableneſs of Prayer in general; and
II*dly*, Of publick Worſhip.

I now proceed

III*dly*, To conſider the Duty of Family Prayer.

It is the Buſineſs of every Man, within the Compaſs of his Abilities, to promote the Honour of God; and conſequently of every Head of a Family to warm thoſe, that are beneath him, with a Senſe of Religion, and to ſee, that nothing, as far as the Sphere of his Power extends, be *hid from the Heat thereof.*

If

SERM. XI.

If then to inſtruct your Family in religious Duties, and to pray fervently with them, as well as for them, would be of any Service to promote Piety; if every Man ought to promote Piety, as much as he can, in the Station in which God has placed him: Then it is the Province allotted you, as the Head of it, to *walk*, as the Scripture expreſſeth it, *in* your *Houſe with a perfect Heart*, and by your Example to *provoke* them (the *only* Way one would willingly provoke any Perſon) *to Love and good Works.*

You may ſay, it is true, Prayers at periodical and ſtated Times are neceſſary to revive thoſe Impreſſions of the Deity, which would otherwiſe be effaced by the Buſineſs or Pleaſures of Life; it is requiſite to ſhift the Scene, and commune with the Father of Spirits, to prevent that Diſreliſh for, and Deadneſs of Affection to heavenly Things, which a continual Intercourſe with ſenſible Objects would elſe occaſion. But why may not this be done in the Cloſet? What Occaſion is there for Family Prayers?

To this I anſwer, that this is to make a wrong Eſtimate of Things; it is to conſider your Family, as entirely conſiſting of Perſons,

Perſons, who have a competent Knowledge how they ought to pray, and a hearty Inclination to ſet about the Performance of this Duty, which is far from being the Truth of the Caſe: It is to conſider them, as what one could wiſh them to be, inſtead of what in Reality they are: It is to argue from Theory to Fact. It is granted, that Men of a ſober and diſpaſſionate Reaſon will reflect, that, if they live, as it were, without a God in this World, without ever praiſing and adoring him; they muſt expect to be ſeparated from him for ever. But then it ſhould be granted too, that the Bulk of Families will not be at this Expence of Reflection: And if you would bring them to a juſt Senſe and right Apprehenſion of theſe Things; you muſt light up Devotion in their Breaſts by your Inſtructions and Example. SERM. XI.

For, when they ſee you employing, and teaching them to employ, the nobleſt Principles of the Soul, Love and Gratitude, upon God the nobleſt of Beings; when they ſee you warmly affected with a Senſe of what you are doing, proportionably to the Value and Importance of the Things you pray for; they, who are thus com-

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modiouſly placed under the direct Influence of ſuch a burning and ſhining Light, will be diſpoſed to catch the Flame from you, and to feel their Breaſts, if they are ſuſceptible of good Impreſſions, burn within them with the ſame generous Ardour.

Beſides, the *united* Devotions of a whole Family acting in Concert will be more effectual, than the *ſolitary* Prayers of any ſingle Member, when detached from the whole Body: As they have a Tendency to beget in others a correſpondent Piety, to propagate the Flame from Breaſt to Breaſt, and to encourage, countenance, and give a Sanction to exemplary Holineſs: But chiefly, becauſe God has promiſed, that *where two or three are gathered together*, he will *be in the midſt of them*. It is a beautiful and amiable Sight to behold a well-regulated Society, glorifying God with one Heart and one Mouth, cancelling their former Sins by Repentance, and forming ſettled Reſolutions of Obedience for the future.

Add to this, that the joint Devotions of a *Family* are as neceſſary to derive a Bleſſing upon a Family, and to return Thanks for Bleſſings already received; as the Applica-

tions of each *Individual* are to beg of God, or to thank him for, his own perſonal Advantages.

If ever then you would have your Children to be dutiful, and your Servants faithful; if ever you deſire your ſmall Community here ſhould join hereafter with the great Congregation of Men and Angels in one Chorus to their Maker; be ſure to cultivate the Spot of Ground committed to your Care, teach them to look up to God in every Step of their Conduct, impreſs upon them, and keep alive in them, by repeated Prayers, a manly, ſerious, and devout Frame of Mind; and ſet apart ſome Portion of the Sabbath to read, or hear them read ſuch good Books, as may inſtruct them in the ſtrong and deciſive Evidence of Chriſtianity, the great Work of their Redemption, and the whole Compaſs of their Duty. From a Neglect of doing this, it comes to paſs, that our Youth, as ſoon as they launch out into the World, fall an eaſy defenceleſs Prey to thoſe Profeſſors of Iniquity, who *go about ſeeking whom they may devour*; that they become Proſelytes from the beſt Religion the World was ever bleſſed with, to no

SERM. XI. Religion at all; and that thoſe, who ſhould be the *Flower* of the Nation, are too often the very *Dregs* of it.

You think it a Duty incumbent upon you to let your Charity begin at Home, in furniſhing your Family with their *bodily* Suſtenance: And is it not much more your indiſpenſable Duty, as Eternity is of infinitely greater Concern, to make Proviſion for their *ſpiritual* Well-Being? He is *worſe than an Infidel, who doth not provide for his own Houſe* in this Reſpect, as well as the *Meat, which periſheth not*, who doth not take Care to make them happy in themſelves, ſerviceable to the World, and acceptable to God.

And to compaſs this End, the ſpiritual Nouriſhment of your Family; it is not enough, though that ſhould by no Means be omitted, that you inſtruct them in the Duty of Prayer. Inſtructions are but Virtue ſet before them in *Theory* (lifeleſs Theory) which, though a lovely Form in the Eye of abſtract Thinkers, yet is too delicate to make any ſtrong Impreſſions upon the Groſs of Mankind, who muſt be affected by what is ſenſible. But your own good Example is

Virtue *realized* and *alive*, it is not a mere abſtract *Notion*, it is ſomething *ſubſtantial*, it is Virtue brought down to their *Senſes*, with all it's attractive Charms; it is Piety as it were *incarnate*; we behold it's external Glory, *full of Grace* and Lovelineſs. SERM. XI.

It is not difficult to convince Men of the Reaſonableneſs of Prayer: All the Difficulty lyes in engaging them to the Practice of it. And as long as a Deſire of Imitation is confeſſedly a ſtrong Principle of Action, one bright domeſtick *Pattern* in a Perſon of ſuperior Character and Authority, ſhewing ſuch a diſtinguiſhed Regard to the Deity, that Morning and Evening come not more conſtantly in their Courſe, than his ſtated Hours of calling his Family to Devotion, will have more Effect upon all beneath him and about him; than a thouſand dry *Inſtructions* without it, which will operate but faintly in Compariſon. By the one you only point out their Duty; but by the other (joining with them in Prayer) you call it forth into Action: You help to raiſe a groveling and low-thoughted Soul, which before was cleaving to the Duſt. By ſo often ſeeing the conſpicuous Luſtre of your Goodneſs, they

SERM. XI. will be led to the approving it; and from approving to imitating it; and from imitating it to be *not only almoſt, but altogether ſuch* as you are.

IV*thly*, I ſhall now ſubjoin an earneſt Exhortation to Prayer, particularly with an Eye to that of the Cloſet.

Degenerate Souls, wedded to their vicious Habits, may diſclaim all Commerce with Heaven, refuſing to invoke him, whoſe infinite Wiſdom is ever prompt to diſcern, and his Bounty to relieve the Wants of thoſe, who *faithfully call upon him*; and neglecting to praiſe him, who is *great and marvellous* in his *Works*, *juſt and righteous* in his *Ways*, infinite and incomprehenſible in his *Nature*: But all here, I would perſuade myſelf, would daily ſet apart ſome Time to *think* on *him*, who gave us *Power* to think: He was the *Author*, and he ſhould be the *Object of our* Faculties.

And, to do this the better, let us take Care, that every Morning, as ſoon as we riſe, we lay hold on this proper Seaſon of Addreſs, and offer up to God the Firſt-Fruits of our Thoughts, yet freſh, unſullied, and ſerene, before a buſy Swarm of vain

vain Images crowd in upon the Mind. When the Spirits juſt refreſhed with Sleep, are briſk and active, and *rejoice*, like that Sun, which uſhers in the Day, to *run* their *Courſe*; when all Nature juſt awakened into Being from Inſenſibility, pays it's early Homage; then let us join in the univerſal Chorus, who are the only Creatures in the viſible Creation capable of knowing, to whom it is to be addreſſed. SERM. XI.

And in the Evening, when the Stillneſs of the Night invites to ſolemn Thoughts, after we have collected our ſtraggling Ideas, and *ſuffered not* a Reflection to *ſtir*, but what either looks upward to God, or inward upon ourſelves, upon the State of our Minds; then let us ſcan over each Action of the Day, fervently intreat God's Pardon for what we have done amiſs, and the gracious Aſſiſtance of his Spirit for the future: And, after having adjuſted Accounts between our Maker and ourſelves, commit ourſelves to his Care for the following Night.

Thus beginning and cloſing the Day with Devotion, imploring his *Direction*, every Morning as we riſe, for the following Day; and recommending ourſelves, every Night before we lye down, to his *Protection*,

SERM. XI. *who neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps*; the intermediate Spaces will be better filled up: Each Line of our Behaviour will terminate in God, as the Centre of our Actions. Our Lives all of a piece will conſtitute one regular *Whole*, to which each *Part* will bear a neceſſary *Relation* and Correſpondence, without any *broken* and *disjointed* Schemes, independent of this grand End, the pleaſing of God. And while we have this one Point in View, whatever *Variety* there may be in our Actions, there will be an *Uniformity* too, which conſtitutes the Beauty of Life, juſt as it does of every Thing elſe; an Uniformity without being dull and tedious, and a Variety without being wild and irregular.

How would this ſettle the *Ferment* of our youthful Paſſions, and ſweeten the laſt *Dregs* of our advanced Age! How would this make our *Lives* yield the calmeſt *Satisfaction*, as ſome *Flowers* ſhed the moſt flagrant *Odours*, juſt at the *Cloſe* of the Day! And perhaps there is no better Way to prevent a *Deadneſs* and Flatneſs of Spirit from ſucceeding, when the *Briſkneſs* of our Paſſions goes off; than to acquire an early Taſte for thoſe ſpiritual Delights, whoſe *Leaf withers not*, and whoſe Ver-

dure

dure remains in the Winter of our Days. SERM. XI.

And when this tranſitory Scene is ſhutting upon us, when the Soul ſtands upon the Threſhold of another World, juſt ready to take it's everlaſting Flight; then may we think with unallayed Pleaſure on God, when there can be little or no Pleaſure to think upon any Thing elſe. And our Souls may undauntedly follow to that Place, whither our Prayers and Affections, thoſe Forerunners of the Spirit, are gone before.

One of the greateſt Philoſophers of this Age being aſked by a Friend, who had often admired his Patience under great Provocations, by what Means he had ſuppreſſed his Anger? anſwered, "that he was naturally quick of Reſentment; but that he had by daily Prayer and Meditation attained to this Maſtery over himſelf. As ſoon as he aroſe in the Morning, it was, throughout his Life, his daily Practice to retire for an Hour to private Prayer and Meditation: This, he often told his Friends, gave him Spirit and Vigour for the Buſineſs of the Day: This he therefore recommended as the beſt Rule of Life. For nothing, he knew, could ſupport the Soul in all Diſtreſſes

"but

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" but a Confidence in the ſupreme Being:
" Nor can a rational and ſteady Magnani-
" mity flow from any other Source, than a
" Conſciouſneſs of the divine Favour." *

Of *Socrates*, who is ſaid to have gained an Aſcendant over his Paſſions, it is reported, that his Life was *full* of Prayers and Addreſſes to God †.

And of *Confucius* the *Chineſe* Philoſopher, another great Example of Virtue, it is expreſsly recorded, that (contrary to a Faſhion now prevailing) he never did eat of any Thing, but he firſt proſtrated himſelf, and offered Thanks to the Supreme Lord of Heaven ‡.

Leave not off praying, ſaid a pious Man: *For either praying will make thee leave off ſinning, or ſinning will make thee leave off praying.* If we ſay our Prayers in a cold, ſupine, lifeleſs Manner now and then, I know no other Effect they will have, but to enhance our Condemnation: In effect we do not *pray*, we only *ſay* our Prayers: We pay not the Tribute of

* See *Boerhaave*'s Life in the *Gentleman*'s Magazine.

† Ἦν ὁ βίος Σωκράτους μετὰ τύχης, Max. Tyrii Diſſertatio, 30.

‡ *Harris*'s Collection of Travels, Folio, Vol. II.

the

the Heart, but an *unmeaning Form* of Homage; we *draw near to God with our Lips, while our Heart is far from him.* And without Perſeverance in Prayer, the Notions of the Amendment of our Lives, and a ſacred Regard to the Deity, will only float for a while in the Head, without ſinking deep, or dwelling long upon the Heart. We muſt be inured to a conſtant Intercourſe with God, to have our Minds engaged and intereſted, and to be *rooted and grounded in the Love* of him. But, if we invigorate our Petitions, which are otherwiſe a lifeleſs Carcaſe, with a ſerious and attentive Spirit, compoſed, but not dull; affectionate, but not paſſionate in our Addreſſes to God: Praying, in this Senſe, will at laſt make us leave off ſinning; and Victory, deciſive Victory, declare itſelf in Favour of Virtue. Praying, as a Thing merely of *Courſe*, without a due Preparation of Mind, will have no Influence. But praying with a *Senſe* of what we are *about*, muſt put us upon endeavouring to be, what we pray to be. For can a Man pray to God to forgive his Sins, and enable him to get the better of them, who is reſolved all the while to conti-

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continue in them? Not certainly, if he beſtowed the leaſt tranſient Glance of Thought upon what he was doing. A Prayer againſt Sin muſt call up uneaſy Reflections in his Mind, who goes on in a Courſe of ſinning: And he muſt either *break off* thoſe *Sins by Repentance*, which make Prayer irkſom to him; or bid adieu to thoſe Prayers, which ſuggeſt diſtaſteful Conſiderations: Piety and Vice cannot very long alternately ſhare a divided Empire in our Breaſts: We cannot keep both to Prayer, Prayer offered with *Life* and *Energy*; and to our Luſts: *Either we will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe we will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other.* Let us, however, remember that the Efficacy of Prayer does not depend ſo much on the *outward Act*, as that *inward Frame* and Diſpoſition of Mind, with which we pray.

It would be of admirable Service to us, when we are praying, to have this Expreſſion frequently in our Minds. "Am I "doing ſo *important* a Buſineſs in ſo *ſlight* "and *perfunctory* a Manner? The moſt "important Buſineſs of all, with Supine-"neſs and Indolence?"

After all, there may be ſome little Singularities cleaving to Men of diſtinguiſhed Piety,

Piety, which thoſe, *who ſit in the Seat of the Scornful*, ſeldom fail to make the ſtanding Mark of their Raillery. But the Queſtion is, whether, when we come to die, we would chuſe to be of the Number of thoſe, who have been moſt charitable and devout, though over ſcrupulous, and to have our *Lot among the Saints*; or of thoſe who have lived in an open flagrant Neglect of the Deity, as if he, the Father of Beings, were the only Being, with whom they were reſolved to have nothing to do. A thouſand little *Weakneſſes* in Acting or Thinking will eaſily be forgiven in thoſe, who have *meant well*, and have to the beſt of their Power *acted up* to that honeſt Meaning: a Senſe of their Infirmities begetting in them a due Humility, and Humility *covering a Multitude* of pitiable Infirmities. But Faults committed with an *high Hand*, and from an *haughty Heart*, Faults proceeding from a *diſdainful Irreverence* and a *ſtubborn* Diſobedience to the *Fountain* of all *Good*, and therefore the *Object* of all *Duty*, who has the juſteſt Claim to every Inſtance of our Obedience, are much more unpardonable, than all the little Frailties incident to human Nature, if they met together in one Subject.

ject. The Laughter of Fools may ſoon be no more: And then we ſhall be ſenſible (why are we not ſo now!) that it is infinitely better to be for a while *ridiculous* for our *Infirmities*; than to be *odious*, perhaps even here, for our *Vices*, and *miſerable* to all *Eternity*.

Doſt thou labour under a Load of Guilt? *Come unto* Chriſt *all that travel and* ARE HEAVY *laden, and he will give you Reſt.* Doſt thou feel the Preſſure of Affliction, or the Blaſt of Cenſure? Inſtead of loathing thy Being, inſtead of breaking out into ſudden Burſts of Paſſion againſt thy Foes, or contracting a ſettled Gloom of Malice; unboſom thy Secrets, and diſburthen thy Cares to him, who is both able and willing to reſettle thy diſcompoſed Mind. All that envenomed Rancour, which is apt to embitter our Spirits againſt Mankind in general, and our Enemies in particular, when we ſuffer, or think we ſuffer undeſervedly, will abate and die away, as we ſtrive to *ſet* our *Affections on Things above*. Our Thoughts, like the *Waters* of the *Sea*, when *exhaled* towards *Heaven*, will loſe their offenſive *Bitterneſs* and Saltneſs, leave *behind* them each *diſtaſtful* Quality, and *ſweeten* into an amiable Humanity and Candour, till they deſcend in *gentle*

gentle Showers of Love and Kindneſs upon our Fellow-Creatures. SERM. XI.

As we invoke *the Father of Lights* to reſcue us from every material Error, *the Father of Mercies* to pardon our Sins, and *the God of all Comforts* to relieve our Diſtreſſes; we ſhall be aſſured, that *all Things*, ſooner or later, *will work together for Good* to us, who love God: And that he, to whom the whole *Family* of Beings *in Heaven, in Earth, and under the Earth, do bow and obey*, will be both now and evermore our mighty Protector; too great to need our imperfect Services; too good not to accept of them, when they flow from a Mind humbly deſirous to do his Pleaſure, and recommend ourſelves to his Favour. For though to an infinitely *powerful* Being *nothing* can be *ſerviceable*; yet to an infinitely *gracious* Being *every* Thing muſt be *acceptable*, which cometh from a *grateful* and an *humble* Heart, which would *be* and *do every* Thing that is *agreeable* to him, and *be* and *do nothing* which is *not* ſo; conſcious, that to him who is infinitely good in himſelf, ever Thing that is good in us muſt be referred: *To whom be aſcribed as is moſt due all Might*, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

On the Duty of Reſignation.

In two SERMONS.

JOB II. 10.

Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and ſhall we not receive Evil?

THESE are the Words of *Job*, when reduced from the Height of Proſperity, to the loweſt Depth of Miſery. When Calamities, a dire Train, ſucceeded one after another; his Wife, haraſſed by Misfortunes, adviſes him to put an unnatural Period to his Life. But he, with that unconquered Spirit, which neither his former Proſperity had ſoftened, nor his preſent Misfortunes had broken, replied, *Thou talkeſt like one of the fooliſh*, or irreligious *Women*: For ſhall we, Beings of a mixed Character, expect pure SER. XII.

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and unmixed Happineſs from our Creator? Shall we, who do ſo much Evil, refuſe to ſuffer any which he ſends? *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and ſhall we not receive Evil?*

How mean and unmanly, in Compariſon of *Job*'s, is the Behaviour of that gloomy Race of Mortals, who have Recourſe to the Inſtruments of Death under any ſevere Affliction, who launch out into another World, weary of the Pleaſures, or impatient under the Pains of this? Who without Underſtanding the Value of Life, or the true Ends of Living, contemptuouſly return back to God the Preſent, which he has made: As if, what he, the Author of every good Gift, had beſtowed, was a Trifle not worth the keeping?

Their Friends may view with weeping Eyes, and even an unrelenting Crowd with ſome Concern, a *mangled* and *diſfigured Carcaſe:* But Men of larger Views will extend their Reflections farther, and lament the Miſeries of a *wounded Spirit*, which has ruſhed unprepared into the Preſence of an incenſed Deity. A ghaſtly *Corpſe* will give *them* the leaſt Touches of Compaſſion: But to conſider the Caſe of

a *Soul*, that has done a Fact which leaves no Room for Repentance, that has plunged itſelf into an Abyſs of endleſs Miſery; to conſider that a new Light is probably let in upon the unbodied Mind, a Light more ſharp, powerful, and piercing, than even that Inſtrument, which diſſolved the vital Union, and divorced the Soul from the Body; — this is what will make the deepeſt Impreſſions upon any *thinking* Spectator. God has joined Soul and Body together: And *what* he *has joined together*, *let* no *Man*, unauthoriſed by him, *put aſunder*. To commit Self-Murder is an abſolute Defiance, or a deſperate Diſbelief of his Providence. It is to diſmiſs *ourſelves* from this State of Probation, before *God* thinks fit to diſmiſs us: It is in Effect to tell him, we will not patiently endure the Chaſtiſements, which he wiſely inflicts.

Not ſo holy *Job*: He conſidered, that he, who ſent him into the World, alone knew when he had fulfilled thoſe Ends, for which he ſent him: That he alone therefore was a competent Judge, when he was to be diſcharged from any further Service here, and to be admitted to a better State. *All my appointed Time*, ſays he,

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will I wait, till my Change come. It is a hard Matter to determine, whether in Proſperity he relieved the Wants of others more generouſly; or in Adverſity bore his own Miſeries more patiently. In the former Caſe, he was a *Father to the Fatherleſs*, he *made the Bleſſing of him that was ready to periſh, come upon him:* And in the latter Caſe, he could reflect; *Naked came I into the World, and naked ſhall I return: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away: Bleſſed be the Name of the Lord.*

To ſuffer undauntedly, ſhews a greater Strength of Mind, than even to act greatly. For to act greatly depends upon a briſker Flow of Spirits, and a warmer Ferment of the Blood: But to ſuffer undauntedly, requires an uncomplying Integrity, and a determinate Firmneſs of Mind. And therefore we have Examples of thoſe, who have dared nobly in the Field of Battle, and yet have ſhewn a cowardly Dejection of Mind, when Death has approached them ſlowly and gradually in all it's Pomp of Terrors upon a ſick-Bed or a Scaffold. A ſudden *Fluſh* of Courage might animate them in the former Caſe:

But there muſt be a *ſettled Temper* to ſupport them in the latter; and to act ſteadily, a Man muſt think ſolidly. SER. XII.

From this famous Example of Reſignation I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

I*ſt*, How far we are allowed to grieve for our Calamities, or how far Grief is conſiſtent with a State of Reſignation.

II*dly*, Upon what Principles our Reſignation to God is to be founded.

III*dly*, I ſhall lay down ſome Rules for the Practice of this Duty.

I*ſt*, I am to ſhew, how far we are allowed to grieve for our Calamities, or how far Grief is conſiſtent with a State of Reſignation.

Chriſtianity may regulate our Grief, as it does every other Paſſion; but does not pretend to extinguiſh it. Let us ſay what we will, and do what we can; yet ungrateful and unwelcome Things will make harſh and ungrateful Impreſſions upon us. It is a Miſtake to think, that even a liberal Education and a refined Turn of Thinking makes Men more Proof againſt Miſery, than other People. No, on the other Hand,

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our Senſibility, whether of Joy or Miſery, ariſes in Proportion to our Ingenuity. A Man of a coarſer Frame ſhall ſlight thoſe Afflictions, which fall heavy upon a more refined Diſpoſition. The Vulgar in Life, as well as in the Drama, are incapable of being touched by a fine Diſtreſs. The ſame Ingenuity and Delicacy of Mind, which ſheds a more lovely Luſtre upon Proſperity, caſts a deeper Shade upon Adverſity: It imparts a more exquiſite Reliſh to every Joy, but gives a keener Edge to Pain and Miſery: Juſt as the fineſt Glaſs, which tranſmits each kindly and enlivening Beam of Light, ſuffers the moſt by each contagious Damp. An over-refined Delicacy, however, is almoſt as bad an Extreme, as an unfeeling Stupidity: and he, who is too tender to bear the leaſt Blaſt of Adverſity, is not fit to live in the World.

It is allowable, nay it is commendable for us to feel a generous Movement of Soul, and to be touched with the Diſtreſſes of *other* People: And certainly it cannot be blameable for us to be grieved at our *own* Misfortunes: Nay, I do not know, but Grief in ſome Caſes is ſo far from being blameable, that it may be even neceſſary, to take

take off any Hardneſs of Heart; and to make it more pliant and ductile, by melting it down. If our *Self-Feeling* be the Foundation of our *Fellow-Feeling*; then, as ſoon as Reaſon can ſhine out in it's full Strength, the Virtues of Humanity and Tender-heartedneſs will ſhoot up, as from a willing Soil, in a Mind prepared and ſoftened by Grief, *like the tender Graſs ſpringing out of the Earth by clear ſhining after Rain.* However that be; the firſt Starts and Sallies of Grief, under any Calamity, are always at leaſt pardonable: It is only a long and continued Courſe of Grief, when the Soul *refuſes to be comforted*, that is inexcuſable: And it is *moſt* inexcuſable, when it bears no Proportion to it's real Cauſe; when it tinctures our whole Way of Thinking, and deſtroys the Reliſh of our Being—when the Hours, too ſwift in their Career during our Proſperity, lag heavy and tedious, as if they were to us, what we are to ourſelves, an inſupportable Burthen—when the Wheel of Time ſeems clogged, and to drag along with a ſlow encumbered Motion through the foul and rugged Ways of Adverſity, which glided ſwiftly over a ſmooth and pleaſant Surface. The Paſſions and Appetites

ceaſe to be clamorous and importunate in their Demands; the Activity of the Soul is deadened, and all it's Powers ſtand ſtill — all, but thoſe of the Imagination, which is then moſt buſy, to heighten real Grievances, and to *call Things, that are not, as though they were*; to call up a thouſand groundleſs Apprehenſions and idle Sorrows, which have no Being, but in Thought, and then to diſturb itſelf as much, as if they were ſo many Realities. And it always works more ſtrongly, in Proportion to the Weakneſs and Emptineſs of the Mind. For which Reaſon *it is not good* for ſuch Perſons, in ſuch a forlorn and diſconſolate State, *to be alone*. For the Imagination of ſuch Men, in Solitude, where Reaſon has left a vacant Space, will be ſure to people the Void with Creatures of it's own, with ghaſtly Chimæras, viſionary Perplexities and Spectres of Horror and Diſtreſs.

Melancholy in Excceſs is an accurſed Spirit, which if we *reſiſt*, it *will flee from us*; but if we indulge it, what was for ſome Time a pitiable Weakneſs, becomes, at length, a deliberate Crime. Violent tempeſtuous Sorrows are like Hurricanes; they ſoon ſpend themſelves, and all is clear and ſerene

ſerene again: There is more Danger from a ſilent, penſive Grief, which, like a ſlow, lingring Fog, ſhall continue a long Time, and blot the Face of Nature all around. That ſoft ſoothing Melancholy, which ſome indulge, is far more injurious to the Health; than the turbulent and boiſterous Paſſions: For it ſaps and undermines our Strength by Degrees, and imperceptibly preys upon us. It gives us wrong Ideas. For Perſons and Things appear to us, juſt according to the Diſpoſition we are in to receive grateful or diſadvantageous Impreſſions from them; and not as they are in their own Nature. And there is as much Difference between the Face of Things, when viewed in a chearful Serenity of Temper; and when diſcerned in a ſullen Gloomineſs of Humour; as there is between the ſame Object, when preſented to View by a clear, open, unclouded Sunſhine, which gives the Sight it's full Play, and does the Object full Juſtice; and when ſeen by the ſickly Light of a lonely Taper, which dims it's Luſtre, and ſhades it's Beauty.

Whatever Allowances therefore may be made for the firſt Workings of the ſoft and tenders Paſſions; yet we muſt guard againſt any

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any ſettled Habit of Grief. Becauſe, 1*ſt*, While it laſts, we ſhall view the Deity, the World, and ourſelves in a wrong Light: The melancholy Damp muſt be done away, before the Mirrour can give us juſt and impartial Images of Things. Becauſe, 2*dly*, It is our Duty to promote ſocial Happineſs: Now Chearfulneſs and inoffenſive Pleaſantry make us agreeable to others, and others eaſy and happy in our Company; whereas habitual Melancholy ſpreads an univerſal Gloom, and damps the Good-Humour of Society. Becauſe, 3*dly*, Not to enjoy with Chearfulneſs the Bleſſings, which remain to us, is not to treat them as what they are, *viz.* Bleſſings, and conſequently Matters of Joy and Complacency; it is to act contrary to the Deſign of our Sovereign Benefactor in pouring them upon us, who would have us *taſte and ſee how gracious* He *is*. Becauſe, 4*thly*, it is the ſame Thing, whether we conſume ourſelves by a ſlow, lingring Poiſon, or diſpatch ourſelves by an immediate Death: We are equally guilty of Self-Murder, whether we knowingly wear away the Springs of Life gradually, which is the Caſe, when we abandon ourſelves to waſting Grief; or we cut at once the Thread of it violently aſunder. Laſtly,

Laſtly, Sorrow is criminal, when we have little or nothing to torment us, but, what is the greateſt Tormenter of all, our own uneaſy Spirit; when we create fantaſtic Grievances, where there were none before; — or aggravate them, where they were; — or when we neglect the neceſſary Duties of Life, to indulge a fruitleſs Grief: — or when we ſuffer Grief to prey upon our Vitals, without unburthening *all our Care upon Him, who careth for us.* — When we do not conſider, that either his Providence will reſcue us from our Miſeries, or his Grace ſupport us under them, or his Wiſdom make all Things *work together for Good* to us, at the laſt final Iſſue and Adjuſtment of Things. SER. XII.

They, who are continually complaining of Inconveniences, ſeem capable of reliſhing any Thing but Heaven; for which a complaining Temper will by no Means prepare them. Whereas, not to repine at the Inconveniences we meet with here, may bring us to that Place, where only there are no Inconveniences at all. And he, who is not diſcontented with a ſlender Portion of Bleſſings, may have the greateſt Bleſſing of all, the Deity to be his *Portion for ever* and ever.

But

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II*dly*, to ſhew, upon what Principle our Reſignation to God is to be founded.

And this is no other, than what *Job* founded his upon, *viz.* a full Confidence in the Deity, that he would make the Sum of his Happineſs, either here or hereafter, greatly exceed that of his Miſery. *I know*, ſays he, *that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand, at the latter Day, upon the Earth; and, though Worms deſtroy this Body, yet in my Fleſh ſhall I ſee God, whom I ſhall ſee for myſelf, and mine Eyes ſhall behold, and not another.*

To tell a Man, to whom Life is become a Burthen; that *there is no Help for him in his God*; but yet he muſt not lay violent Hands upon himſelf; becauſe it is eternally and indiſpenſably fit, that a Creature ſhould be reſigned to his Creator; that he is placed in the Station of Life by God, as a Soldier at his proper Poſt, which he muſt not relinquiſh, till releaſed by his Commander; notwithſtanding the Inclemency of the Seaſon beats hard upon him, notwithſtanding that Commander will neither puniſh him for a Breach of his Duty, nor reward him for

for a ſtrict Performance of it: To talk thus to him, when the Diſadvantages of Life greatly overbalanced the Advantages of it, would be an Affront to his Underſtanding, and an Inſult upon common Senſe. In ſuch an uncomfortable Situation, I do not ſee why Perſons greatly diſtreſſed might not fly to Death before *their appointed Time*; juſt as Perſons haraſſed with Fatigues, or enfeebled by Sickneſs lay themſelves down to Reſt, before the Night cometh, which putteth a *natural* Period to our Labours. But prove to him, that there is a particular Providence to redreſs his Grievances, and that his Afflictions will work out for him an exceeding Weight of Happineſs; then indeed Reſignation to God becomes an indiſpenſable Duty, and Self-Murder a Crime; then he may argue, *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and ſhall we not receive* a little *Evil? Father, if it be poſſible, remove this Cup from me; nevertheleſs not my Will, but thine be done.* To found Virtue upon the Will of God, enforced by proper Sanctions, is founding it upon a Rock: The Rains may deſcend, and the Storms of Affliction beat hard againſt the Structure; yet it will ſtand firm and unmoveable;

Ser. XII. moveable; becauſe it is founded upon a Rock, the Will of God, the Rock of Ages. The Conſideration of a Being, whoſe Power created, whoſe Wiſdom governs, and whoſe Juſtice will judge the whole World, will have an Influence in all Caſes. But Arguments from the unendowed Beauty of Virtue, and from the abſtract Fitneſſes of Things, are of too fine and delicate a Texture to combat the Force of the Paſſions, or to ſtand the Shock of Adverſity.

Indeed, ſetting Revelation aſide, I know of little or nothing, that can make the preſent State of Things ſupportable to a thinking Mind. The Hopes of a better World can alone make this, where *there is one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked*, tolerable to us. And we know little of a future State from the Light of Nature. The beſt Argument, and indeed the only one, on which any Streſs can be laid, is; that, ſince there is here an undiſtinguiſhing Diſtribution of Good and Evil, there will be a future State to adjuſt all Inequalities. But this Argument, though it may prove a future State in general, is very far from making out the Eternity of that State, or

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the *Degree* of Happineſs: Since a much leſs Compaſs of Duration, than Eternity, a much leſs Degree of Bliſs, than an exceeding Weight of Glory, will be ſufficient to ſet to Rights all ſeeming Diſproportion and Inequality of Favours during the ſhort Term of our Lives here below. According to the Goſpel Promiſes, *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive* thoſe *Things which God has prepared for them that love him.* All the Ideas we can form of future Felicity are widely diſproportioned to their great Originals. Suppoſe a Man, that had been blind from his Birth, ſhould, being reſtored to his Sight by a Miracle, immediately ſurvey the lively Verdure of the Earth, the Arch of Heaven, the Glories of the Sun, and the unmeaſurable Expanſe of the Creation; what Raptures would he be affected with at the ſudden View of a Scene ſo entirely new to Him? Much greater undoubtedly will the Soul be tranſported with, when ſhe ſhall be admitted to that Fulneſs of Bliſs, which would at preſent overpower her feebler Faculties. That God will put the repenting Sinner (and the beſt of us are but repenting Sinners)

SER. XII. ners) upon a much better Foot hereafter, than the unrepenting; is a clear Dictate of Reaſon: But that he will admit Him to a State of unallayed exceeding and everlaſting Happineſs, without any Puniſhment for his Sins, without any intermediate State of Trial and Probation, without any Tincture of Sorrow and Pain, can only be proved by Revelation. So highly neceſſary was a Revelation to aſcertain theſe beneficial Truths; that, whereas every Man's Death without it would be, in a great Meaſure, what an Atheiſtical Philoſopher ſaid of his, a great Leap into the Dark; the Promiſes of eternal Life are, through our Saviour's Merits, infinitely valuable; and, through his Veracity, infallibly ſure.

We cannot ſay, conſiſtently with Reaſon and Modeſty, that God *muſt* pardon our Sins upon Repentance: All, that we can pretend to, is, that he *may* pardon them. But then the ſame Reaſons, that induce us to conclude that he *may* pardon them, ſhould make us apprehend, that he may *not* pardon them. For what God *may* do, that he may likewiſe *not* do; juſt as the *Summa rerum*, the general Good of the whole requires. It muſt be allowed, that

Sins

Sins of a *deeper* Dye are the juſt Objects of Puniſhment. Now for the ſame Reaſon, that *any* Sin is the juſt Object of divine Vengeance, *all* Sin is ſo likewiſe. For all Sins are of the ſame *Nature*; and one differs from another only in *Degree*. And the ſame Right, that God has to inflict Puniſhment upon *notorious* Sinners; the very ſame he has to puniſh proportionably, and in a leſs Degree, every *leſſer* Sinner. Either then we muſt ſay, that *no* Sin whatever renders us obnoxious to divine Vengeance; or it muſt be granted, that *all* Sin does ſo too. And if ſo, can it be proved by the Light of Nature, that God will treat us hereafter, as, what we are not, innocent Beings, that deſerve no Puniſhment? SER. XII.

Here then Reaſon was at the End of it's Line, it ſtood upon the Shore, eyed the vaſt Ocean of Eternity which lay before it, it ſaw a little, imagined a great deal; but Clouds and Darkneſs ſoon terminated it's narrow Proſpect. Revelation, on the other Hand, has enlarged our Views, it inſures to us, what Reaſon could never prove, a Fulneſs of Pardon, upon our Repentance, from God, without clogging it with any Exceptions whatever; and an uninterrupt-

ed Enjoyment of clear Happineſs, Truth and Virtue, for ever and ever: It aſſures us, that this Life is our only State of Probation, and that in the next the Good ſhall be as the Angels of God: And were we once in that bleſſed State, we ſhould be perhaps more reluctant to come back again to this World, though we were to enjoy the moſt diſtinguiſhed Advantages in it; than thoſe, who enjoy the moſt diſtinguiſhed Advantages in it, would be to be thruſt down into a dark noiſom Priſon. Theſe are glorious Thoughts, which ennoble the Soul at all Times, and ſupport it under any fiery Trial. With ſuch animated Hopes full of a bleſſed Immortality, the primitive Chriſtians gave the ſtrongeſt Proofs of their Virtue, (like Incenſe fragrant, as it conſumes in the Fire,) at the ſame Time, that they felt the ſevereſt Tortures.

They therefore, who would diſprove Revelation, endeavour to deprive us of what is our beſt Guide in the Day of Proſperity, and our only Comfort in the Day of Adverſity. The Generality of Infidels may be divided into two Sorts. The greater Part of them live on in one uninterrupted Track of Debauchery, without deviating often into Thought

Thought and Conſideration. And theſe are the happy Men among them, if Happineſs conſiſts in want of Thought: Men, whoſe Mouths ſpeak againſt Chriſtianity, from the Abundance of a wicked Heart; for it cannot be ſaid, they ſpeak againſt it from the Abundance or Fulneſs of the Head: Standing Monuments of the Inſufficiency of that Reaſon, which they ſo highly extol, and of the Neceſſity of that Revelation, which *giveth Wiſdom to the Simple:* Men, who eſpouſe the Cauſe of Infidelity for the ſame Reaſon, or rather no Reaſon, for which they wear a particular Mode of Dreſs, merely becauſe it is the prevailing Faſhion among their Acquaintance: gleaning Objections, that are dropped in Converſation from much ſhrewder Men; humbly content to *gather up the Crumbs, that fall from their Maſter's Table,* without ever thinking for themſelves, or laying in a Stock of Knowledge. But thoſe few Infidels, who love to be at a great Expence of Reading and Thinking, have their Minds generally overcaſt with black and melancholy Ideas; out of Humour with themſelves, (ſo far perhaps they have Reaſon,) and with every Thing elſe; the SER. XII.

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great Diſturbers of the Repoſe of Mankind and their own, who are for ſubverting Revelation, without giving, or indeed being able to give us any Equivalent in lieu of it: The Rewards and Puniſhments diſcoverable by natural Reaſon, being not clear nor determinate enough to afford ſufficient Encouragement to the Good, and Diſcouragement to the Bad.

To be a thoughtleſs Deiſt, is confeſſedly to be a Fool; To be a thinking Deiſt, is to be a Wretch: But to be a ſober ſerious Chriſtian, is the beſt Way to make us tolerably eaſy through all the changing Scenes of Life; to heighten the Pleaſures, and leſſen the Miſeries of it: The Precepts of Morality in Scripture are our beſt Counſellors in Life, and Health; and the Doctrine of the Redemption our only ſure Support at the Hour of Death. To be a thinking Infidel, is to conſider, how vain, unſatisfactory and precarious, all our preſent Pleaſures are; how ſoon we may be ſnatched from them, or they from us: It is to look upon this Life, as a Dream; and of the next, as one undiſtinguiſhed Void, or univeral Blank, of which he can know little or nothing, without the Help of the Revelation, which he rejects.

It is Chriſtianity, which teaches us to deſpiſe the Follies, abhor the Vices, and combat the Miſeries of this World; which, inſtead of affording ſuch dry and jejune Conſolations as Philoſophy afforded it's Votaries, informs us, that Afflictions are ſent to wean us from this World, and fix our Hopes on a better;—that they are the Chaſtiſements of that Being, who *pitieth us as a Father pitieth his own Children*:—that we ought patiently to ſubmit to *natural* Evil, which he inflicts upon us, by Way of Atonement for *moral* Evil, to expiate the ſecret Sins of the virtuous, and to bend the ſtubborn Minds of preſumptuous Sinners.—That what we muſt feel as Men, we may bear as more than Men, through the Grace of God, who, if he does not always proportion our Trials to our natural Strength, will adjuſt the Aſſiſtances of his bleſſed Spirit to our Exigencies, giving us the Security of divine Protection, at the ſame Time that we are ſubject to the Frailties of human Nature:—that, whereas we are apt to look upon the preſent State, as an intire unconnected independent Scene, which has no Relation to a future State; God views both Worlds at once, and conſiders

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ſiders what will be for our Advantage, with Regard to the whole Extent of our Being; —that, if we make a due uſe of Calamities, our Patience under them will endear us to Him,—that the Time will come, and muſt ſhortly be, when we ſhall conſider all Troubles in that Light, in which *Moſes* taught the *Iſraelites* to regard the *Egyptians* juſt upon the Brink of the Red Sea: *Theſe Egyptians whom ye have ſeen to Day, ye ſhall ſee them again no more for ever:* Theſe Troubles, which ye have hitherto undergone, ye ſhall no more undergo; Pain and Sorrow ſhall be no more, but one undetermined View of Bliſs for ever and ever be before you.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

On the Duty of Reſignation.

JOB II. 10.

Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and ſhall we not receive Evil?

HAVING, in a former Diſcourſe, ſhewn, *Iſt*, How far we are allowed to grieve for our Calamities, or how far Grief is conſiſtent with a State of Reſignation; SER. XIII.

And, II*dly*, Upon what Principles our Reſignation is to be founded:

I proceed to my III*d* general Head, *viz.* To lay down ſome Rules for the Practice of this Duty.

In the firſt Place, do not expect perfect Happineſs: It depends not upon ourſelves alone; but upon a Coincidence of ſeveral Things, which ſeldom hit all right. *Several* Ingredients are neceſſary to make up

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the coſtly Compoſition; but *one wrong* Ingredient is enough to poiſon the whole, and render it diſtaſteful.

When we firſt make our Entrance into the World, we are too apt to form ſanguine Notions, and to propoſe to ourſelves high Enjoyments in this World. But by that Time we reach the Noon of Life, frequent Diſappointments, Croſſes, and Pains call home our Thoughts, lower our ſwelling Ideas, and reduce them to a juſt Senſe of Things, to what is really attainable in this State, which is at beſt, for any length of Time, nothing but Eaſe, Tranquillity, and moderate Satisfactions. *All the Rivers run into the Sea*, ſays *Solomon*, *yet is not the Sea full*: So ſhould all earthly Pleaſures, without thoſe of a moral and ſpiritual Nature, center in one Soul; yet would not that Soul be filled or ſatisfied: Becauſe, the Soul being a ſpiritual Being, none but ſpiritual Pleaſures can be ſuited to it's Nature, and proportioned to it's Greatneſs; becauſe in the next Place Virtue is the Health of the Soul, which is as neceſſary to give a Reliſh to any Pleaſure within, as the Health of the Body is to make us reliſh our Meat and Drink.

2*dly*,

2*dly*, If you would not be overmuch troubled at the Loſs of any Thing; take Care to keep your Affections diſengaged. As ſoon as ever you have placed your Affections too intenſely beyond a certain Point on any Thing below; from that Moment you may date your Miſery. Whether Riches, Pleaſure, or Honour, be the chief Point in View; take it for granted, there is not that earthly Thing, but what is ſufficient to make you very unhappy, when once you become too ſtrongly attached to it. Whenever you are deprived of it, you will be indifferent to all the Bleſſings of Life, which you are poſſeſt of: There will be a craving Void left aking in the Breaſt, which it will be no eaſy Matter to ſupply and fill up. A ſure Indication this, that God has deſigned himſelf, in whom there is *a Fulneſs of Joy*, to be the principal Object of our Deſires. And ſome have been of Opinion, that the Soul feels ſtronger Pangs in being torn from thoſe Things, for which ſhe has contracted a long habitual Fondneſs; than ſhe does in being divorced from that Body to which ſhe has been long united. Guard then betimes againſt any growing Paſſion, whether for Riches, Pleaſures, or Honours; and

and you will find the Loſs of them will ſit leſs heavy upon you. We reſt with the main *Bent* of our Souls upon earthly Things, as our principal Supports; the Conſequence of which is, that, when they *ſlip* from *under* us, our *Fall* is more *hurtful*, in Proportion to the *Weight* and *Streſs*, with which we relied upon them.

2dly, Reflect on the Advantages you have rather, than be always dwelling on thoſe you have not. Turn your Thoughts to the bright Side of Things. The Pleaſures of Converſation, the Endearments of Friendſhip, the ſolid Satisfactions of Virtue and Benevolence, are more or leſs in every Man's Power. Lead a Life which knows no Vacancy from generous Sentiments, and then *the Spirit of a Man will ſuſtain his Infirmities.*

We are affected with delightful Senſations, when we ſee even the inanimate Parts of the Creation, the Meadows, Flowers and Trees, in a *flouriſhing* State. There muſt be ſome rooted Melancholy at the Heart, when all Nature appears ſmiling about us, to hinder us from correſponding with the reſt of the Creation, and joining in the univerſal Chorus of Joy. But if Meadows and Trees in their chearful Verdure,

dure, if Flowers in their Bloom, and all the *vegetable* Parts of the Creation in their moſt advantageous Dreſs, can inſpire Gladneſs into the Heart, and drive away all Sadneſs but Deſpair; to ſee the *rational* Creation happy and flouriſhing, ought to give us a Pleaſure as much ſuperior, as the latter is to the former in the Scale of Beings. But the Pleaſure is ſtill heightened, if we ourſelves have been inſtrumental in contributing to the Happineſs of our Fellow-Creatures, if we have helped to raiſe an Heart drooping beneath the Weight of Grief, and revived that *barren and dry Land, where no Water was*, with refreſhing Showers of Love and Kindneſs. Reflections upon our Benevolence to our Species, next to thoſe upon our Piety to God, will be to us, what they were to *Job*, who dwelled much upon them, our beſt Comfort under the Preſſure of Adverſity. SER. XIII.

Conſider, that Bleſſings you enjoy are the *free Gifts of God:* But the Calamities you ſuffer are the juſt *Wages of Sin.* And yet perhaps you are inſenſible of, and ungrateful for the former, though unmerited Favours; while you murmur and repine at the latter, which you have fully deſerved.

Think,

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Think, how many are more miſerable than you. Think, at the ſame Time, that you are curſing the Day of your Birth, or, wiſhing for that of your Death, upon the Account, it may be, of ſome trifling Loſs or Diſappointment; how many are perhaps dying of Poverty, and a broken Heart; or are living, (but had better be dead,) abandoned to extreme Want and Deſpair; how many may be ſinking at once into the devouring Deep, with Thoughts more diſturbed and embroiled than the Deep itſelf; *wondring, but there is none to ſave; looking, but there is none to uphold.* And whatever Misfortunes you labour under; be thankful to God for one ineſtimable Advantage, that you ſtill have Power and Opportunity to ſecure, the greateſt Bleſſing of all, everlaſting Life: An Advantage, that thouſands want, who may, this Inſtant, be lying under the Agonies of a Death-bed Repentance, juſt ready to plunge into the Depths of unutterable Woe. What would theſe poor Wretches give, that they were in your Condition!

4*thly*, Let us reflect, how reaſonable it is, that our Wills ſhould be conformable and reſigned to the divine. Could you com-

compaſs ſome favourite Scheme in View, the Center of your Wiſhes, and the End of your Endeavours; eternal Miſery might, for any thing you know, to a Mind like yours, be the Conſequence of it. Should thoſe Calamities come upon you, which you dread and fence againſt; they may be the effectual Means of your Salvation. For Calamities, God's extraordinary Means of reforming Sinners, may penetrate that Heart, which the common Occurrences of Life could not reach or affect. Becauſe, though God's Hand may be legible in them, yet it is only ſo to an attentive Obſerver: But violent Afflictions will rouſe the Soul, juſt as a Hurricane does the Body, from the moſt profound Repoſe. SER. XIII.

No Body ought to pray for Wealth or Honour, in an unreſerved Manner, or without ſuch Reſtrictions as theſe. "O thou "eternal Being, the ſole Author of every "Thing that is good *in itſelf*; and the "ſole unerring Diſcerner of what is good "*for us*; if thou ſeeſt that I ſhall be more "beneficial to the World, and more happy "in myſelf, by an Acceſſion of Fortune; "then may thy Goodneſs confer it upon "me: But if thou foreknoweſt, that, in-

SER. XIII. "ſtead of doing more Good thereby, it "will dazzle my Mind, and make me "forget my Friends, forget Thee, the "beſt of Friends, forgetting moſt of all "myſelf, the better Part of myſelf;—then, "rather ſtrip me of every Thing, but my "Virtue; than grant me all the Enjoy-"ments in this World, without that well-"grounded Peace of Conſcience, which "this World cannot give, and the Loſs of "which nothing, which it can give, can "countervail."

Perhaps you are uneaſy, that you are deſpiſed, and your proud Heart rebels within you. Alas! Men do not, properly ſpeaking, ſo much deſpiſe you, as they do your Fortune: And can you wonder they ſhould deſpiſe that, which is deſpicable and little in itſelf? Nothing can be leſs, except it be *their* Minds, who diſregard you upon that Account; or your *own*, who are troubled above Meaſure at it. If you had an ample Fortune, they would idolize you; though, like an Idol indeed, you *had Eyes and ſaw not* any Thing in a true Light; *Ears and heard not* the Voice of Reaſon; ſo very contemptible, that nothing can be more ſo, except it be thoſe who *put their Truſt* in you.

Are

Are you ſorry to ſee Worth and Virtue neglected, while Vice thrives and is advanced? Why thus it generally has been, and thus it always will be, without a Miracle. For Worth and Virtue is backward in making Advances, content with a Conſciouſneſs of deſerving thoſe Honours, which it ſeldom gains. Whereas the Worthleſs leave no Stone unturned to compaſs that by Dint of Aſſurance and unwearied Application, which they deſpair of upon any other Foot. Add to this, that the Worthy will riſe, if at all, by worthy Means. They will ſcorn, after a great Example *, to do that *for* Preferment, which even the Worthleſs would not do, *but* for Preferment. And when they find all the *direct* Avenues to Greatneſs blocked up, when they cannot *enter in* by the proper *Door*, which is that of Virtue; they will not poorly and abjectly *climb* or creep up ſome *other* Way, *like a Thief and a Robber*, by any indirect and ſiniſter Artifices. Whereas the Bad are not ſcrupulous, they can careſs little Engines of Power, proſtitute their Conſcience, and make a ſorry Purchaſe at the Expence of Honour and Religion. SER. XIII.

* See *Chillingworth*'s firſt Letter at the End of his Works.

SER. XIII. But which is the moſt happy? the former or the latter? He is far happier, who even amidſt the *univerſal Wreck* of his Fortunes has preſerved *one invaluable Pearl*, his Virtue, worth infinitely more than all he has loſt; than that Man is, who, whatever elſe he remains poſſeſſed of, has made Shipwreck of a good Conſcience. The Man, *that has loſt his own Soul*, is miſerable indeed; but he, who amidſt *all* his *Loſſes* has not loſt *himſelf*, that *better* Part, which is *chiefly* himſelf; has within him that conſcious Worth, and that bright Proſpect before him, which will abate the Edge of his Misfortunes. Not *all* the *united* Evils, which human Malice can invent, or Power execute, are comparable to *one ſingle* Evil, *viz.* that of *Guilt*; when one has incurred the Wrath of that Almighty Being, *in whoſe Pleaſure is Life*, and whoſe Diſpleaſure is worſe than Death. He who is happy in nothing but his Innocence, may enjoy himſelf much more, than the moſt proſperous Villain, who, if he thinks at all, muſt have ſeveral Hours of exquiſite Anguiſh, when by himſelf; which his Pride coneals from Company, and the View of the World. The Perſon, whoſe Sins are

like

like a ſore Burthen, too heavy for him to bear, feels a greater Load, than any he can lay upon another. There is a Pleaſure even in the ſilent Melancholy of a quiet Conſcience, far ſuperior to all thoſe noiſy, and therefore empty Joys, which are deſigned to divert the Thoughts of a guilty One. When all the World frowns upon him, and every Thing looks black about him; that Being, whoſe *the whole World is, and all that is therein*, can *lift up the Light of his Countenance* upon him, ſo that there ſhall be nothing black or dark within him. SER. XIII.

Are you ſorry to ſee the Madneſs of the World, to ſee, that Reaſon, though, like our Saviour, it came into the World to reign and bear Sway; yet, like Him, has *no Kingdom of this World*; like Him, it is born down by Nonſenſe, Rage and Fury, by Faction and Tumult; that Debauchery, amaſſing Wealth, and propagating ſenſeleſs Opinions, is the great Buſineſs here; that Irreligion flouriſhes, and Chriſtianity decays? Remember, that Truth, though, like our bleſſed Saviour, it may be buried for a while, yet will riſe victorious, and ſurmount all Oppoſition. Remember, what God ſaid to *Elijah*, when

SER. XIII. he complained that He *only was left* of the true Believers: *Yet have I left me ſeven thouſand in Iſrael, who have not bowed the Knee to Baal.* Yet are there ſeveral thouſands, Men, whoſe diſtinguiſhed Senſe and Judgment nothing can equal but their Piety, Humanity and Virtue; who, after a thorough Examination, chuſe to live in, and would dare to die for, the Chriſtian Religion. Whereas, cool-thinking Infidels are as rare to be met with, as cool-thinking Villains, (to whom I would be underſtood to compare them only in Reſpect of Number;) though thoſe that are ſo are generally incurable. It has been obſerved, that there is ſeldom or never any ſuch Thing as a diſintereſted Malice in cold Blood againſt any Man: All ſedate Malice ariſing from ſome real or imaginary Oppoſition of Intereſt. The ſame holds true as to Chriſtianity: There is perhaps no ſuch Thing as a cool, ſedate, diſintereſted Malice againſt it: The Hatred towards it ariſes from hence, that it is not ſome Men's Intereſt it ſhould be true; that it lays before them ſuch diſtaſteful and unpalatable Truths, as that they muſt be eternally miſerable, if they go on ſtill in thoſe Practices, to which

long Cuſtom has wedded them. Hence all that Bitterneſs and Virulence againſt it. Chriſtianity is too *ſtrict* for the criminal Pleaſures of ſeveral in *high* Life; too *ſimple and rational* for ſeveral in *low* Life, who are carried away with pompous Appearances, and overbearing Pretenſions: Hence *Irreligion* is ſpreading among the *Gentry*, and *Enthuſiaſm* among the *Populace*. But yet, amidſt all our Melancholy Apprehenſions, it ought to be ſome Comfort to us, that in an Age and Nation, where bad Books and bad Principles are induſtriouſly diſperſed, Divine Providence has taken Care, as it always does, that there ſhould be Variety of Antidotes at Hand, and that the Remedies ſhould at leaſt bear Proportion to the Poiſon. And nothing, that has been advanced in favour of Infidelity, is left *unanſwered*; but, what *muſt* ever be *unanſwerable* by *us*, that *audacious Inſolence*, and *ill-bred* Raillery, with which ſhameleſs Writers have treated ſacred Subjects. SER. XIII.

But perhaps public Grievances do not affect you ſo much; let us then proceed to thoſe of a private Nature.

Are you deprived of your Friends? Convinced by ſad Experience, upon how pre-

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carious a Tenure we hold, that moſt valuable Bleſſing, Friendſhip; we ſhould learn, from hence, to cultivate *one Friendſhip more*; a Friendſhip *unprecarious* and unperiſhable, a Friendſhip with that Being, who is the Almighty *Helper of the Friendleſs, who will never leave* us, *nor forſake* us. Inſtead of ſorrowing, as Men without Hope, for our departed Friends; let us conſider, that the greateſt Inſtance of our Kindneſs to the Memory of the Dead, is to think, live and act; as we may reaſonably preſume, they would deſire of us, and expect from us, if alive; and their Deſire would be, that we ſhould not diſquiet ourſelves above Meaſure.

Thoſe, whoſe Lives have been drawn out to any length, muſt have ſurvived ſeveral of their Friends; and, though new Ones may ſucceed, and be adopted into their Room; yet after having taſted the Pleaſures of old Friendſhips, they ſeldom greatly reliſh the new; becauſe they *ſay*, and think, *the old were better*. The Reaſon of which probably is, that Men inſenſibly join the pleaſurable Ideas of their younger Years, with the Ideas of thoſe Perſons, with whom they then converſed. The Remembrance

of

of that Seaſon of Delight, aſſociates itſelf with, and gives an agreeable Luſtre to, what was ſaid and done then, and to thoſe who ſaid and did it. After the Loſs of an old Acquaintance, to whom we uſed to pour forth all our Soul, (and no Wonder, for he was *as our own Soul*,) nothing can ſo effectually bear up the Mind, as a Conſciouſneſs, that we have acquainted ourſelves with God, who was our *Guide from our Youth*, will not forſake us, *when our Strength faileth*, and will be *our Portion for ever*. SER. XIII.

Are you, though innocent, deprived of your Reputation? When Perſons through Ignorance miſtake, or through Villainy miſrepreſent your Actions; can you wiſh for a nobler Theatre to diſplay your Virtues, than the Heaven of Heavens; for an auguſter Aſſembly to applaud them, than the united Hoſt of Men and Angels; or for a greater Judge to reward them, than He, who is at once the unerring Judge of Perfection in others, and the conſummate Standard of Perfection in himſelf? In the mean Time you will beſt anſwer all Objections againſt your Goodneſs, by doing Good; as the Philoſopher anſwered the Cavils

SER. XIII. againſt Motion, by moving, and walking about: And, when by this Means you have eſtabliſhed your Character; you may deſpiſe each idle Blaſt of Cenſure, as *a Wind that* ſoon *paſſeth away, and cometh not again.*

Does the Fear of Ills appall you, which muſt certainly come upon you ſome Time or other; as Sickneſs, for Inſtance, or the Apprehenſions of imminent Death? Nature, or rather the wiſe Author of Nature, ſupplies us, during our Illneſs, with ſeveral Reſources of Comfort, which we were not before aware of. When we are in full Health, we cannot imagine, how we ſhould brook Pain, Sickneſs, and Confinement: No ſooner are we ill, than we find a new Set of Deſires, a new Train of Ideas, a new Frame of Mind, ſuited to the preſent Occaſion. We no longer eagerly covet that Liberty, thoſe Diverſions and Enjoyments, which were before our favourite Deſires. In ſhort, moſt Ills, in this Particular, reſemble a Fog: While we are at a Diſtance, they ſeem ſo ſolid, as to ſhut out each Glimpſe of Light; but no ſooner do we approach them, than we find they are much thinner, than they appeared.

Are

Are you obliged to ſit down under ſome grievous Diſappointments? Perhaps you might have been as much diſappointed, if you had ſucceeded; by finding, that Things upon Enjoyment ſeldom anſwer the gay flattering Ideas, which we form beforehand; and that your Reaſon had been the Dupe of your Imagination, which had painted Objects bigger than the Life. Many, who have concluded, they ſhould be thoroughly miſerable, if they miſcarried in their Purſuits; yet, ſome Time after their Miſcarriage, have been quite eaſy and contented. An abſolute Deſpair of gaining a Point, will as effectually put a Stop to the Craving of our Deſires, as the very Poſſeſſion of the Thing deſired: The Soul will be no longer reſtleſs, but take Things as it finds them, and enjoy what it has. From hence we may learn, that, though every Man muſt know what he *deſires*; few or none know, what they do *not want*; not want, I mean, in regard to the real Neceſſities, or valuable Conveniencies of Life; though they might wiſh for them to furniſh a Supply for their Vanity, or for the Gratification of ſome exorbitant Paſſion. It muſt be owned, for the Honour of Nature (or rather of

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the Author of Nature,) that half the Miſeries in the World are owing to Follies, of which Nature is entirely innocent. Beſides thoſe Inclinations, which are originally interwoven in our Frame; Education, Cuſtom, and the Faſhion of the World, have begot in us ſeveral artificial Deſires. Now, if Providence has made the Gratification of our natural Appetites eaſy under proper Regulations; it is no Reflection upon his Goodneſs, that he has not put it in every Man's Power to ſatisfy thoſe acquired Cravings, and fantaſtic Deſires, which we have created in ourſelves. We ſeldom fail to revenge upon ourſelves the Wrong we have done Nature, by ſeverely ſuffering for departing from it's Simplicity, to introduce a Taſte for expenſive Follies. We are firſt uneaſy, becauſe we imagine we want ſuch Things; and, when we are in Poſſeſſion of them, we are uneaſy, becauſe we find ſuch Things are wanting in themſelves.

Are you aggrieved by oppreſſive Power? What then, ſhall Virtue be injured here; and ſhall it's Grievances not be redreſſed? Surely, *then have I cleanſed my Heart in vain, and waſhed my Hands in Innocency.*— But hold, impatient Man—Wait thou with humble

humble Reſignation of Mind; till, at the laſt grand Revolution, all Diſtinctions, but (the only valuable Ones) thoſe of a religious and moral Nature, ſhall be no more; till that Glow-worm Luſtre, with which ſome, at once both bright and deſpicable, have been inveſted, ſhall diſappear at the Dawn of everlaſting Day! SER. XIII.

Wouldſt thou be grieved at a *Minute*'s Uneaſineſs, which ſhould be productive of Happineſs for the *whole* Term of thy following *Life?* No ſurely. Why this Life bears no more Proportion to Eternity, than a Minute does to thy Life below. It is but a *Point*, in Compariſon of thy *whole* Exiſtence. Submit then to Afflictions, which God ſeverely kind lays upon Thee: Afflictions, which are but for a Moment; yet, if patiently endured, will work out for you an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. Carry thy Eyes upwards to that bleſſed Place, where thy Nature ſhall be, as it were, caſt anew; purified from all droſſy Mixtures, and coarſe Alloys of human Frailty; but brightened and refined, as to the ſterling Luſtre and genuine Excellencies of the Soul. Here is one continued Repetition of the ſame unſatisfactory Objects, and

there

SER. XIII. *there is nothing new under the Sun:* But there, far perhaps above the Sun, new Scenes, new Beings, new Wonders, new Joys will preſent themſelves to our enlarged Views.

Look then upon this World, as one wide Ocean, where many are ſhipwrecked and irrecoverably loſt, more are toſſed and fluctuating; but none can ſecure to themſelves, for any conſiderable Time, a future undiſturbed Calm. The Ship, however, is ſtill under ſail; and whether the Weather be fair or foul, we are every Minute making nearer Approaches to, and muſt ſhortly reach the Shore: And may it be the Haven, where we would be!

Then ſhall we underſtand, that, what we miſtook for and miſcalled Misfortunes, were, in the true Eſtimate of Things, Advantages, invaluable Advantages. Then ſhall we know, why Riches were withholden from us, and Poverty our Lot; namely that Riches might have begotten in us an Indifference to Religion, Sloth, Luxury, Inſolence to diſtreſſed Merit, and a Contempt of our Fellow Creatures: Whereas Poverty was the Parent of an Affection for the Things above, and of all the

the lovely Train of Siſter Virtues, *viz.* Temperance, Patience, Humility, Meekneſs, and Induſtry in our reſpective Callings. SER. XIII.

Then will it ſignify little or nothing, whether we have gone down to the Chambers of Death, by an eaſy gradual Deſcent; or have been violently puſhed off the Precipice of Life; whether we have been toſſed by Storms and Tempeſts: or had a ſmooth and eaſy Voyage, to the Shore of everlaſting Reſt. Unleſs it be to repent of the Sins of our paſt Lives; it is ſcarce worth our while to look backward: Let us then look forward to that Life which is to come. Let us conſider all the ſplendid Amuſements of this World, as ſo many gay Follies; and all the more important Tranſactions of it, as ſo many ſober Follies; if they interfere with our Preparations for the next. Let us repoſe an unreſerved Truſt in that Being, whoſe Almighty Power will protect us, whoſe unerring Wiſdom will direct our Goings, and whoſe infinite Goodneſs will overpay our ſlight Sufferings with an unfading Crown of Glory.

When all human Means fail, the Deity can ſtill, upon any extraordinary Emergency,

SER. XIII. gency, adapt his Succours to our Neceſſities. His Relief can come, juſt as our Saviour did to his Diſciples, *When the Doors were ſhut*, then *ſtood he in the midſt of them, and ſaid, Peace be unto you.* The Doors are never ſhut againſt the *divine* Aſſiſtance: *That* can find a Paſſage, and gain an Admittance, when *nothing elſe* can: It can ſpeak Comfort to the Deſponding, and Peace to the Dying, the *Angel from Heaven*, that muſt *ſtrengthen* us in our laſt Agonies. And ſometimes the Deity defers his gracious Aid, till there be no Probability of human Relief; that, what is done at this Criſis to ſave us from imminent Ruin, we might diſcover to be his Doing, and acknowledge it *to be marvellous in our Eyes.*

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

On Evil-Speaking.

JAMES IV. 11.

Speak not Evil one of another, Brethren.

IT is a melancholy Conſideration, that Converſation runs very low; that, if any Topic of Religion is ſtarted, it brings us under the odious Imputation of Cant and Hypocriſy; if any Topic of uſeful Learning, it lays us open to the Cenſure of Pedantry and Ill-Breeding: that, if the Thread of Converſation be very fine, it is often immediately and abruptly broken off; but, if it be of a coarſer and more homely Contexture, it is generally more durable and laſting. Strange! that a Set of Creatures, diſtinguiſhed by Reaſon and Religion from Brutes, allied to Angels, and capable of holding an Intercourſe with God, ſhould rarely utter one Religious Sentiment worthy of a reaſonable Being: While ſeveral have Recourſe to Oaths and Imprecations, to fill

fill up the mighty Void of Senſe, and to ſupply the Vacancy of Reaſon; making the ſacred Names of their Creator and Saviour, which ought to ſuggeſt the moſt awful and auguſt Ideas, to be in their Diſcourſe, what they themſelves are too often in the World, idle inſignificant Expletives.

But what falls under my preſent Conſideration, is the reigning Vice of Evil-Speaking. I ſhall therefore ſhew,

I*ſt*, The Extent of the Precept in my Text.

II *dly*, The Cauſes of Evil-Speaking.

III *dly*, The Unreaſonableneſs of it.

I*ſt*, Then, I am to ſhew the Extent of the Precept in my Text.

In the firſt Place, This Precept does not extend ſo far, as to hinder us from telling another Man his Faults, with a View to his Amendment: We may ſpeak Evil of a Man, with a Deſign to do Good to Him. *Thou ſhalt, in any wiſe, rebuke thy Neighbour; Thou ſhalt not ſuffer Sin upon him.* But we are guilty of a Breach of our Duty, when we give our Advice in a ſupercilious magiſterial Manner, rather to ſhew our own

own Authority and Superiority in Wiſdom, than to benefit the Party concerned. We muſt conſult the gentleſt Manner and ſoft-eſt Seaſons of Addreſs: Our Advice muſt not fall, like a violent *Storm*, bearing down and making that to droop, which it was meant to cheriſh and refreſh: It muſt de-ſcend, as *the Dew upon the tender Herb*; or like melting Flakes of Snow; the *ſofter* it falls, the *longer* it *dwells* upon, and the *deeper* it ſinks *into* the Mind. If there are few, who have the Humility to receive Ad-vice as they ought; it is often, becauſe there are as few, who have the Diſcretion to convey it in a proper Vehicle, and to qualify the Harſhneſs and Bitterneſs of Re-proof, againſt which corrupt Nature is apt to revolt, by an artful Mixture of ſweeten-ing and agreeable Ingredients. To probe the Wound to the Bottom, with all the Boldneſs and Reſolution of a good ſpiritual Surgeon; and yet with all the Delicacy and Tenderneſs of a Friend, requires a very dexterous and maſterly Hand. An affable Deportment, and a Complacency of Beha-viour, will diſarm the moſt obſtinate: Whereas if, inſtead of calmly pointing out their Miſtakes, we break out into unſeem-

ly

SER. XIV. ly Sallies of Paſſion, we ceaſe to have any Influence. So far then as Men tell others of their Faults with an Intention to reform them, and in a proper and becoming Manner; ſo far they do not offend againſt the Prohibition in my Text.

2*dly*, It is no Crime to deſcant upon the Faults of our Neighbour, which are *publick* and notorious. For where can be the Harm for any Man to talk, of what *every* One knows?

3*dly*, Though nothing can juſtify ill-grounded uncharitable Opinions; yet in Caſes, where we have a ſufficient Information, a wide Difference is to be made between what we ſay in a mixed Company, and what we diſcloſe to a particular Friend; who is virtually under a Covenant with us, not to betray our private Converſation. For we cannot forbear to communicate our *whole Soul*, without any Reſerve to him, who is, as it were, a *Part* of our Soul. To be always upon our Guard, is like being always in Armour: It is cumberſom and uneaſy: However we may wear it for our Self-Defence among Enemies, or Perſons whom we do not know to be otherwiſe; yet, among intimate Friends, one chuſes

to put it off, and to be free and diſengaged.

Nor, 4*thly*, Do we act contrary to the Meaning of the Text, when we are called upon by lawful Authority to ſpeak what we know againſt a Criminal. For we are not obliged to bear *no* Witneſs at all againſt our Neighbour; we are only to *bear* no *falſe Witneſs*. This Rule extends to giving Teſtimonials and Characters of Servants, or Candidates for an Employment. To give them no Character at all, is to all Intents and Purpoſes the ſame, as giving them a bad one: And to give them a good Character upon the whole, when they do not deſerve it, is to be eaſy and good-natured at the Expence of Truth and Juſtice.

5*thly*, We are ſo far from acting againſt the Precept of my Text, that it is an Act of Charity, as well as Juſtice, to ſtrip the Wolf of his Sheep's Clothing, which he has put on to make a Prey of the innocent and unſuſpecting. It is a Matter of great Conſequence to the Public, that the Characters of wicked Men ſometimes ſhould be univerſally known, as well as the Characters of the virtuous. It is highly neceſſary, thoſe ſhould be undeceived, who

repoſe a Confidence in one that may bear a fair Character, but is no better than a Villain. Accordingly, our Saviour, who exemplified an univerſal Good-Will to Mankind in all his Actions, yet takes off the ſpecious Gilding from thoſe Hypocrites, who *for a Pretence made long Prayers, that they might devour Widows Houſes.* He removed the thin Veil of Hypocriſy, and diſcovered thoſe mean Deſigns, which lurked beneath their Pretenſions to an uncommon Sanctity. Where a Man's Vices only hurt *himſelf*, and terminate in his own Perſon; there we have no Right to *publiſh* them: becauſe we can anſwer no good End thereby: But where they affect, or may affect *others*, it is our Duty to warn as many, as we think proper, a due Regard being had to our own Safety. Only let us take this Caution along with us: Before we endeavour to undeceive others; let us be ſure, we are not deceived ourſelves. That Rule, which a celebrated Philoſopher laid down for the Conduct of the Underſtanding in judging of the Truth of Things, is as neceſſary for our Conduct in judging aright of the Characters of Men, *viz.* Always to ſuſpend our Judgment, till we have got clear,

clear, distinct and decisive Evidence. Never proceed upon any slender Surmises, and precarious Conjectures, the Workmanship of the Brain. Proportion your Assent to the Clearness of the Proofs upon which it is built. SER. XIV.

The Sum of all is this: We may speak ill of a Man, after we have gained a Competent Knowledge, and formed a right Judgment of his Character,—provided we think it necessary to detect him; either because the public Good requires it, or lest any particular Person, whose Good we have at Heart, should be infected by his Company, or over-reached by his Cunning. But where, as one expresseth it, there are no Reasons of *Conscience* to make a *Good* Man *speak out*; there are always Reasons of *Prudence* to make a *wise* Man *hold* his *Tongue*.

There is one Remark, which falls under this Head, that must not be omitted, *viz.* That we are obliged, by a Principle of Self-Defence, to set a Mark of Infamy on those who have injuriously branded the Reputation of their Neighbours. For he, who has injured *one* Person, either in his Reputation or Fortune, *threatens every* Body. And therefore common Prudence will teach us to give such a Man his just Character,

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that he may not be able to make diſadvantageous Impreſſions upon the unwary and undeſigning, by giving every Man elſe a bad one.

If a Man's Vices are ſo flagrant, and his Character ſo infamous, that there is no Danger he ſhould impoſe upon others; what are we to do in ſuch a Caſe? I do not ſay, it is unlawful to ſpeak Evil of him: But the leſs we ſay of him, ſo much, I think, the better; unleſs it be our Deſign to raiſe an Indignation in ourſelves or others againſt the like Practices. To be often inveighing againſt his Vices, however notorious, looks as if we took a Complacency in dwelling on his Faults. And it is not the Property of *Charity*, or of a *charitable* Man, *to rejoice in Iniquity*. *Let the Dead bury their Dead:* Let thoſe, that are dead to all Sentiments of Virtue, delight to throw Dirt upon Men in the ſame State with themſelves.

It may be aſked, whether it be lawful to ſpeak ill of the Dead: And the Anſwer is, that it either muſt be lawful in ſome Caſes, and under proper Reſtrictions; or we muſt condemn all Hiſtorians (the ſacred Ones not excepted) who have tranſmitted the

the Faults as well as Virtues of the Dead to Poſterity. There is a Tenderneſs due to the Memories of thoſe, who are no longer in a Capacity to ſpeak for themſelves: And therefore we ought to be very careful not to charge any Crimes upon them, of which we have not ſtrong authentic Proofs, either from perſonal Knowledge, or from Perſons of unſuſpected Veracity. Where there is even a faint Probability, that the Fact, of which they are accuſed, might be otherwiſe than it is repreſented; there we ought to be ſilent. But where the Facts are ſo notorious, that they admit of no Doubt; ſo flagrantly bad, that they need no Aggravation; there we ought to conſider, that there is a Curſe denounced upon the Wicked, that their Memories ſhould rot; as there is a Promiſe to the Righteous, that they ſhould be had in Remembrance, and their Memories be embalmed. It is wrong likewiſe to ſpeak Evil of the Dead, for the *Sake* of Evil-Speaking, without a View to the Information of the Living.

Laſtly, Though it is our Duty not to ſpeak ill of any Man, without ſome of the Reaſons, which I have mentioned; yet

SER. XIV. it does not follow, that we ought to ſpeak well of every Body promiſcuouſly, and in general: Becauſe we ought to make a Diſtinction, where there is a Difference: We ought to pay the Tribute of Praiſe, where Praiſe is due; otherwiſe we rob the Good of that Fame, which is a Debt to Merit only, by putting all Mankind upon a Level. He, who commends every one, in Effect commends no one at all. An undiſtinguiſhing Praiſe confounds the Characters of Men, as well as an undiſtinguiſhing Cenſure: Juſt as overmuch Light has the ſame Effect, as overmuch Darkneſs; we ſee nothing as it really is. By throwing an undiſtinguiſhed Glare of Praiſe on every Object, we perceive no Object at all in it's juſt and genuine Light. There has been ſo much Proſtitution of Applauſe, that ſcarce any Commendation is valuable; but what comes from thoſe, who can diſcommend with Impunity, and commend without an Expectation of a Reward.

II*dly*, Having thus ſtated the Extent of this Duty, I proceed to point out the Cauſes of Evil-Speaking.

The

The firſt of which is an Affectation of Wit. SER. XIV.

To do Juſtice to a great and good Character, requires an uncommon Judgment, Delicacy and Diſcernment. But nothing is more eaſy than to turn any Perſon, however deſerving, into Ridicule: It is only to exchange one Idea, which furniſhes no Matter for Ridicule, for another near akin to it which does; that of Serioufneſs, for Inſtance, and a compoſed Behaviour, for that of a ſtiff Formality and Solemnity; and then the Work is done. The Vulgar may be eaſily made to miſtake the one for the other: And when they have once viewed a valuable Perſon in a ridiculous Light, they are ſcarce capable ever after of conſidering him in any other: The ludicrous Repreſentation recurs to their Memory, as often as the Perſon thus miſrepreſented offers himſelf to View. Thus what is only the Sport of a wanton Fancy, may be worſe than Death to an innocent Man.

But whatever Pleaſure Men of this Turn may take in Ridicule, it is better to be innocently dull, than to have all the Wit in the World, and yet, by the Miſapplication of it, to make one worthy Man one's Foe.

Ser. XIV. One humane and generous Sentiment is of more Worth, than all the merely ludicrous and witty Thoughts, that ever were. For one humane Sentiment towards our Fellow-Creatures touches the *Heart*, and diffuſes a ſedate and laſting *Complacency* there: But Thoughts merely witty and ludicrous only pleaſe the *Fancy* for a while, and raiſe a Blaze of *Mirth* as ſhort-lived, as the *Crackling of Thorns*, to which *Solomon* compares it. An ill natured Man may be a Prodigy of Parts: He may have an uncommon Brightneſs; but then it is, like that of a Summer's Sun, an *intolerable* Brightneſs; to ſhun it's ſcorching Beams, we retreat to the *Shade*, and had rather bury ourſelves in Retirement, than endure his Converſation. That Wit is truly amiable, which gladdens and enlivens every Thing, which ſhines with a Luſtre gentle, but not faint; and powerful, but not glaring.

He, who endeavours to oblige the Company by his Good-Nature, never fails of being beloved: He, who ſtrives to entertain it by his Good-Senſe, never fails of being eſteemed: But He, who is continually aiming to be witty, generally miſcarries of his Aim: His Aim and Intention is

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to be admired, but it is his Misfortune either to be deſpiſed or deteſted; to be deſpiſed for Want of Judgment, or deteſted for Want of Humanity. For we ſeldom admire the *Wit*, when we diſlike the *Man*. There are a great many, to whom the World would be ſo charitable, as to allow them to have a tolerable Share of *common* Senſe; if they did not ſet up for ſomething *more* than common, ſomething very uncommon, bright and witty. If we would trace the Faults of Converſation up to their original Source; moſt of them might, I believe, be reſolved into this: That Men had rather appear ſhining, than be agreeable in Company: They are endeavouring to raiſe Admiration, inſtead of gaining Love and Good-Will: Whereas the latter is in every Body's Power, the former in that of very few.

The 2*d* Cauſe is an Haſtineſs or Precipitancy in Judging, before we know the whole of the Caſe. Nothing is more common than to pronounce, with a deciſive Air, upon a Man's whole Character from a ſuſpicious Circumſtance; and that too in Caſes, where none, but thoſe who are intimate with him, can have deciſive Evidence.

Actions

SER. XIV. Actions appear abſurd, which are yet founded upon weighty and ſubſtantial Reaſons, known to the Party concerned, but unknown to us. The Motive he acts upon may be a Secret confined to his own Breaſt. Several have, I believe, incurred the Imputation of Covetouſneſs, who really could not have expended more than they did, without being injurious to their Families, and perhaps to their Creditors.

A ſingle Circumſtance *ſlipt in*, will envenom a whole Relation; and there may be often a Circumſtance *omitted*, which would give quite another Turn to the whole. Incline always to the favourable Side, when Things are doubtful. If you ſhould be miſtaken on the charitable Side, God will overlook your Miſtake, and accept your Charity. But if you miſtake through Uncharitableneſs,—All that I ſhall ſay is, May your Hearers conſider your Invectives with Judgment, and your Maker with Mercy!

3. A third Cauſe is Malice. A good-natured Man will be far from thinking, that nothing can give Life and Spirit to Converſation, but Scandal and Raillery: He will take Care that, after ſome Hours

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ſpent in his Company, none ſhall reflect upon any Expreſſion of his, which ſhall dwell upon their Minds with Pain and Uneaſineſs. Whereas unhappy Tempers take a ſullen Satisfaction in blaſting Characters: And it muſt be owned, they have often a very unlucky Turn that Way: Keen Glances of Cenſure proceeding generally from a dark involved Temper, like Flaſhes of Lightning from a gloomy Sky.

Or perhaps a malicious Man ſhall go a more artful Way to work. "Such a "Man, ſays he, has ſeveral good Quali-"ties, and I cannot ſay, but I have an "Eſteem for him. But what a Pity is it, "that he ſhould act in ſo ridiculous a "Manner, as he has done lately? I am "heartily ſorry for it; I know more than "I will ſay; But I love not to dwell upon "Faults." Thus he ſhall expreſs a World of Sorrow for his Neighbour's Miſconduct; when after all this extraordinary Concern he ſhall not fail to ſet it out in the moſt aggravating Circumſtances: He ſhall expreſs more than is true; and intimate more than he expreſſes: He ſhall introduce what he has to ſay againſt a Man, with a Recital of ſome valuable Qualities, on Purpoſe to give himſelf

Ser. XIV. himſelf an Air of Impartiality; and then ſhall uſher in a Character, which would not be received from a declared Enemy, or an angry Man. A malignant Praiſe has been always the moſt ſucceſsful Vehicle to inſinuate Slander; as Poiſon is never more artfully conveyed, than in Perfumes.

It muſt be obſerved, for the Honour of Human Nature, that a much larger Majority in Towns and Villages are the peaceful and inoffenſive Inhabitants: Except in very large and populous Places, there are not, generally ſpeaking, above five or ſix troubleſom intermeddling Perſons, *Enemies unto Peace*, and the Peſts of Society. And yet theſe, by forging Falſhoods, and grafting upon the Truth ſeveral inflaming Circumſtances, by miſrepreſenting what is innocent, perverting what is good, and aggravating what is Evil, ſhall diſturb the Peace of the whole Neighbourhood, ſpread Lies, and foment Diviſions. I do not know what Pleaſure Men of this Stamp may take, in ſuppoſing themſelves to ſtand clear of thoſe Vices, which they charge upon others. But this I dare venture to ſay, that the ſame Meanneſs and Littleneſs of Soul, which makes them ſo inquiſitive to know, ſo glad

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to hear, and ſo induſtrious to ſpread any Fault of others, would make them commit the very ſame; provided they had the ſame Temptations and Complexion. For Vice proceeds from nothing, but the Meanneſs and Baſeneſs of a depraved Soul.

To this Claſs of ill-natured Perſons thoſe muſt be reduced, who love, as they expreſs it, to ſpeak their Minds upon all Occaſions, privileged Talkers; affronting thoſe above them, inſulting thoſe beneath them, and diſpleaſing every Body. But if they will always ſpeak *freely*, what they think; they ſhould firſt take Care to think *juſtly*, as they ought, *tenderly* of others, *humbly* and ſoberly of themſelves.

The moſt delicate Pleaſure, is to impart it to our Fellow-Creatures; complaiſant, but never inſipid; frank, but never rude and unguarded; general in our Civility to all the Company, and particular to each Perſon, by Turns; when the Diſcourſe is directed to us, lending a favourable Attention, and making pertinent Replies; like a fine Picture, which ſeems to fix an Eye upon, and direct it's Views to each Perſon in the Room, who looks upon it, and eyes it attentively. And, if Politeneſs (Polite-

neſs I mean as to the main Eſſentials) be an Attention to ſay and do thoſe Things only, which may ſend others away pleaſed with themſelves and us, as far as is conſiſtent with Reaſon and Truth; then certainly Politeneſs is a Part of natural and revealed Religion, the latter of which expreſly commands us to *be courteous*; It is Good-Nature beautified and refined by Art: Good-Nature, which, like the Author of Nature, is not *extreme to mark what is done amiſs*. Charity, the moſt lovely of Virtues, repreſents others as lovely as poſſible. It does not *merely* let us ſee an Object, as it is; it is a Kind of Sunſhine, which *brightens* what it lets us ſee. Whereas Ill-Nature paſſes over all the ſhining Parts of a Man's Character, and dwells entirely on the dark Side of it: As a Painter of low Rank ſhall throw thoſe Beauties into Darkneſs and Shade, which his Eye cannot endure to behold; becauſe his Hand cannot reach them.

The 4*th* Cauſe of Evil-Speaking is Envy, or an Uneaſineſs ariſing from a Reflection that the Perſons envied are our Superiors in Fortune, or other Abilities. This prompts us to depreciate their Worth, and to bring down their Character to a Level with ours; ſince we cannot advance ours

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to the ſame Eminence. We cannot outſtrip them by fair and direct Means; and therefore we endeavour baſely to ſupplant them. SER. XIV.

Men of ſolid Senſe and Virtue ſeldom envy others, or think themſelves deſpiſed: Becauſe few or none are apt to *think* themſelves ſlighted, except thoſe, that *deſerve* to be ſo: They, on the other hand, have that genuine Feeling, that inward Conſciouſneſs of Goodneſs, that home-felt Satisfaction, which the vain and conceited may pretend to, but never truly perceive. This makes them never out of Humour with themſelves: And when Men are not out of Humour with themſelves, they ſee and repreſent others in the moſt lovely Light. One need not envy any Perſon, nor conſequently detract from Him. Let a Perſon be our *Better*, as he is called; provided he is not our *Better* in, what is *beſt* of *all*, Religion and Virtue. The Virtuous and the Good are the only Perſons to be envied; if there were not a better Way to be taken, which is to make ourſelves as virtuous and good as they are, by *doing* all the Good we can, and *purpoſing* more, than we can do.

The 5*th* Cauſe is little perſonal Animoſities, juſt after a ſuppoſed or real Injury,

Ser. XIV. where there is no ſettled Malice. And therefore it would be a good Rule, that, before our Paſſions are thoroughly cooled, we make a Reſolution to ſpeak all the Good we know of our Adverſary: But if we cannot do this, that then we reſolve never to ſpeak of him at all any further, than our own Self-Defence obligeth us. Becauſe whatever *good* Qualities we can allow him at *that* Juncture; thoſe, we may depend upon it, he *has*. But the *ill*-Qualities, with which we find a ſtrong Inclination to charge Him, thoſe perhaps he has *not*. For let your Knowledge of Mankind be never ſo great; yet you never can ſee Perſons or Things in a true Light, unleſs you view them cooly and diſpaſſionately: The ſame ſober and diſpaſſionate Temper, which qualifies a Man for an Enquiry into the Truth of Things, enabling him likewiſe to form a juſt Judgment of the Characters of Perſons. Obſerve, what your Sentiments of the ſame Perſon are, after he has done you ſome ſignal Favour; and you will find this to be ſtrictly true: You will find the Judgment, which you formed in the Heat of your Temper, intirely reverſed. Let this then be the fixed Determination of your

your Mind, to forbear all offenſive Words and Actions; till you are calm enough to examine the Affair minutely, and to give it a Re-hearing. Take it for granted, that, whatever the Ferment of Paſſion ſuggeſts, is either entirely, or at leaſt in ſome Meaſure falſe. We all *ſee through a Glaſs darkly*; but Paſſion makes us ſee through a Glaſs *falſly*, which magnifies Injuries beyond their due Proportion. This we all acknowledge in our *cooler* Hours; yet it is ten to one we moſt unaccountably forget it upon the *next Provocation*. Such is our Nature; and it is amazing, that He, who has ſtudied it, and knows his own Weakneſſes, ſhould be ſevere upon any Body, but himſelf. SER. XIV.

The *6th* Cauſe of Evil-Speaking is an ill Life in general. Thoſe, who know a great deal of Ill of themſelves, are apt to ſuſpect Ill of every Body elſe. *Thou thoughteſt wickedly, that I was ſuch an one as thy Self*, is the Character, which the Pſalmiſt gives of an immoral Perſon. They accuſe People of Wickedneſs, which they *do not* know to be true; and cenſure them for what they *cannot* know to be true, *viz.* their Intentions, and the Thoughts of their

Ser. XIV.

Hearts. They ſhall fancy, as *Nero* did, all to be inwardly as bad as themſelves; though ſome are more artful to ſave Appearances. Thus their *Talk* is a conſtant Satyr upon others, and their *Actions* a living Satyr upon themſelves. Let them *ſay* what hard Things they pleaſe; they can *do* much harder Things than they ſay. Their foul Language is nothing but the Overflowings of a much fouler Heart.

The *7th* Cauſe of Evil-Speaking is Talkativeneſs. There are ſeveral who have neither a Fund of Senſe enough to talk well, nor Modeſty enough to be ſilent. They muſt either act the Part of *Mutes* upon the *Stage* of Life; or they muſt have Recourſe to the ſtanding Topics of Converſation, which are to defame public Parties, or vilify particular Men. It is beneath the worthy to *go about as a Tale-bearer among the People*; that is the Province of the worthleſs; meer leaden Pipes: though the Metal be dull, baſe and ignoble, they ſerve to convey freſh Streams of Intelligence to every place: We apply Gold, and the nobler Metals, to other Uſes.

It muſt, however, be owned, that Men, who deſerve well in other Reſpects, ſhall be

be ſometimes guilty of this faſhionable Vice; either becauſe, though they have a general and ſtanding Conviction that Evil-Speaking is a Crime; yet they do not conſider and attend to the Malignity of it at that Juncture; or becauſe the Commonneſs of the Crime inſenſibly reconciles it to their Thoughts: They ſee it practiſed every Day, and that makes it familiar to them, and takes off every Idea of Horror. To obviate thoſe ill Effects, which Cuſtom may have, let us conſider,

III*dly*, The Unreaſonableneſs of Evil-Speaking.

For Men are not more miſtaken in any Thing, than in the Eſtimate they make of Crimes. They ſeem to judge of them more from their *Uncommonneſs*, than from the baneful *Conſequences*, which attend them. Whatever Crime is *uncommon*, is *ſurpriſing*, and conſequently *more ſhocking*; than others perhaps of a deeper Dye, which, becauſe we ſee them committed *every* Day, we therefore think very *ſmall* or *no* Crimes at all. They do not excite that *ſtriking* Diſguſt and Averſion, which they would do, if more *unuſual* and *infrequent*. It is obſervable,

SER. XIV. vable, that in Faſhions, Opinions, and Modes of Dreſs, nothing *ſeems* abſurd, to which Men have been *accuſtomed* from their Infancy. It is the ſame in Sins: Nothing moves Horror, that is familiar to us. To rob a Man of his good Name, is not ſo ſhocking a Vice, as to rob him of a Sum of Money: Yet he, who does the latter, knows, how much he has taken, and what Reſtitution to make: but it is impoſſible for him, who does the former, to make an adequate Judgment, how much the injured Perſon has ſuffered, and what Reparation he ought to make. For he cannot tell, what Advantages the Perſon might have received, if no diſadvantageous Impreſſions had been given of him.

Many value Reputation more than Life, which, without Reputation, is but a Burthen. The *Tongue* therefore, that wounds *that*, may be a *ſharper Sword*, than any *other*, which can only hurt the *Body*. He whoſe *Teeth are Spears and Arrows*, may pierce deeper to the Heart, than if he, in a literal Senſe, employed thoſe Weapons againſt his Adverſary.

It is certain, that, according to the common Saying, ſo much Reputation is ſo much Power;

Power: and in Proportion to Men's Credit, Esteem and Character in the World; their Weight, Influence and Power to do themselves and others Good will be greater and more extensive. In *some* Stations of Life, to deprive a Man of his good Name, is to deprive him of his Livelihood, of his *All* in this World, as in Matters of Trade and Commerce; and in *all* Stations and Callings, a great deal depends upon the Character which we maintain; and whatever sullies the Brightness of our Reputation, lessens our Usefulness. SER. XIV.

Let us consider, whether it would do the World or ourselves any Harm, if that Scandal, that precious Knowledge, of which we are so communicative, should die with us. If it would not do any Harm; then it is one of the first Principles of Morality, not to give others Pain and Uneasiness, not to wound them, either in Mind or Body, without a *sufficient Cause*, without a Design to compass some valuable End; and take it for granted, whatever Pleasure you may feel in giving Utterance to ill-natured Suggestions; there is a much greater in stifling them. But if *out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth* must *speak:* If the

Ser. XIV. Fulneſs of your Soul impatient to aſperſe others upon *every* Occaſion, upon *no* Occaſion, muſt have a Vent; then you are certainly in the very *Gall of Bitterneſs, and the Bond of Iniquity.* On the contrary, what Commendations does he deſerve, who at the ſame Time that he has too much good *Senſe* to *think well* of the Worthleſs; has too much *Charity* to *ſpeak ill* of them, when there is no Neceſſity for it?

What, if a Perſon, who in the Main has led a good Life, ſhould yet, contrary to the general Tenor of it, be guilty of ſome unaccountable Weakneſs? What ſhould we learn from this? Not certainly ſome poor Materials for idle Converſation, in which whatever Expence of *Words* there may be, there is no Expence at all of *Thought:* No, it ought to teach us ſomething far more uſeful and noble, a Leſſon of Diffidence of ourſelves, Watchfulneſs and Circumſpection; leſt we, who *think we ſtand*, ſhould alſo *fall.* The Miſcarriages of a good Man, which give an ill natured Pleaſure, to *little* Minds, ſuggeſt to every *great* Mind the moſt *melancholy* Ideas of the Weakneſs of *human* Nature in *general*, but no *ſpiteful* and *venomous* Reflections againſt *his* Weakneſs

neſs in *particular*. Far from inſulting over his fallen Worth, he views his Downfal with a generous Pity, and warned by it, *works out* his own *Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. As when the young, the blooming, and the vigorous, who bade fair for length of Days, yet pine away, or are cut off by ſome ſudden Sickneſs; it teacheth us to be more temperate, and cautious to preſerve the Health of the *Body*: So when the Good and Virtuous, from whoſe former Actions we might expect an uninterrupted Courſe of Piety, are overtaken, we ſcarce know how, in any notorious and flagrant Vice: this ſhould put us upon our Guard, and make us take all due Precautions to preſerve the Health of the *Soul*. This is the Uſe we are to make of theſe pitiable Inſtances: They are no Subjects for wanton Merriment, Pleaſantry and witty Spleen: No, they are Subjects for a ſerious Conſideration on our own Frailty: They teach us not to be too ſanguine, or over-ſecure. "Tell me, O my Conſci-
"ence, have I ever done, or ſhall I ever
"do any Thing like this?" Would to God we would talk and commune oftner *with ourſelves*: We ſhould the ſeldomer

SER. XIV. talk *vainly about* ourſelves, and *uncharitably* about *others*.

Laſtly, It is no unuſual Thing to hear ſome complaining, that their Abilities to do Good, and to abound in Works of Charity, are cramped within a narrow Sphere, though their Inclinations are very large and extenſive. Now, if theſe Men are in earneſt, I will point out one Kind of Charity, which will be not expenſive to themſelves, and yet endear them to their Fellow-Creatures. Their Circumſtances may not enable them to cheriſh Merit by their Generoſity, and to relieve Diſtreſs by their Charity: But this charitable Office is daily in their Power, to caſt in Shades their Neighbours Miſconducts, and to ſet out in the moſt advantageous Point of View their good Qualities; to extenuate their Failings, and to do Juſtice to their Virtues; to produce an obſcure Character into Light, and to reſcue an injured one from Obloquy. *Silver and Gold* they may *have* little or *none*; *but ſuch as* they *have*, *they may give*, viz. what is *better* than Silver and Gold, a *Good Name* and Reputation to their Neighbours.

I ſhall conclude with ſome Advice to thoſe who ſuffer in their Reputation.

Let

Let them conſider, that " if the Invec-
" tives againſt them are true, they ought
" rather to correct themſelves, than make
" Repriſals upon others * : But if falſe, a
" Contempt of them will deſtroy the Be-
" lief of them; but a Concern will argue
" the Truth of them." Let them endea-
vour to *put to Silence the Ignorance of fool-iſh Men, by well-doing.* Let them make it their Buſineſs to acquire a ſufficient Stock of Merit; and great Merit, like Light, cannot be intirely concealed; though it is moſt amiable, when it does not ſhew itſelf in too open and full a Glare. The Veil of Modeſty cannot long hide genuine Worth; any more than the Maſk of Hypocriſy can long cover our Vices. He, who *is* ſubſtantially good, will, in Deſpite of all Defamation, e'er long *appear* ſo. The Arrow may be drawn to the Head, and levelled with a dexterous Aim; but cannot reach a Virtue, which riſes to an uncommon Height. Let them, laſtly, put their Truſt in that Being, *who will make their Righteouſneſs as clear as the Light, and their juſt Dealing as the Noon-Day.*

* The Advice of *Mecænas* to *Auguſtus* in *Dio Caſſius.*

SERMON

SERMON XV.

On the Love of God.

MARK XII. 30.

Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength. This is the Firſt Commandment.

IT is the improved Ability of the *Head*, that forms the *Philoſopher:* But 'tis the right Diſpoſition of the *Heart*, that chiefly makes the *Chriſtian*. 'Tis our Love directed to that Being, who is moſt worthy of it; as the Center, in which all Excellencies unite; and the Source from which all Bleſſings proceed.

Love is the fulfilling of the Law. 'Tis not the *mere* Action that is valuable in itſelf. 'Tis the *Love*, from which it proceeds,

SER. XV. ceeds, that ſtamps a *Value* upon it, and gives an endearing Charm and *Beauty* to it. When a ſervile Fear engroſſes the whole Man, it locks up all the active Powers of the Soul, it cramps the Abilities, and is rather a Preſervative againſt Sin, than an Incentive to Virtue. But Love quickens our Endeavours, and emboldens our Reſolutions to pleaſe the Object beloved; and the more *amiable* Ideas we entertain of our Maſter, the more *chearful*, *liberal*, and *animated* the *Service*, that we render him, will conſequently be.

Upon Love therefore the Scriptures have juſtly laid the greateſt Streſs, that Love, which will give Life and Spirit to our Performances. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength. This is the Firſt Commandment.*

In diſcourſing on which Words I ſhall

I*ſt*, Inquire into the Nature and Foundation of our Love to God.

II*dly*, I ſhall endeavour to ſtate the Meaſure and Degree of it.

III*dly*,

III*dly*, I ſhall examine, how far the Fear of the Deity is conſiſtent with the Love of him. SER. XV.

I*ſt*, I ſhall enquire into the Nature and Foundation of our Love to the Deity.

The Love of God may be defined a fixed, habitual, and grateful Regard to the Deity, founded upon a Senſe of his Goodneſs, and expreſſing itſelf in a ſincere Deſire to do whatever is agreeable, and avoid whatever is offenſive, to Him.

The Proceſs of the Mind I take to be this.

The Mind conſiders, that Goodneſs is every where ſtamped upon the Creation, and appears in the Work of the Redemption in diſtinct and bright Characters: It conſiders in the next Place, that Goodneſs, a lovely Form, is the proper Object of Love and Eſteem; and Goodneſs to us, the proper Object of Gratitude. But as Goodneſs exiſts no where but in the Imagination, without ſome Good Being, who is the Subject of it; it goes on to conſider, that Love, Eſteem and Gratitude, is a Tribute due to that Being, *in* whom an infinite *Fulneſs* of Goodneſs ever *dwells*, and *from* whom *Emanations* of Goodneſs are ever *flowing*.

Nor

SER. XV. Nor does the Mind reſt here: It takes one Step farther to reflect, that a cold ſpeculative Eſteem, and a barren, unactive Gratitude, is really no ſincere Eſteem or Gratitude at all; which will ever vent itſelf in ſtrong Endeavours to imitate, a Delight to pleaſe, and a Deſire to be made happy by, the being beloved.

If we attend to what is here advanced, the Diſpute whether the Love of God be diſintereſted or no, may be the more eaſily adjuſted: And all the Confuſion upon this Head has aroſe from conſidering the Love of God, under a partial and imperfect View, from conſidering it merely as a *Philoſophical Eſteem* for Him, without taking into the Account, what the Love of God chiefly implies, a ſincere and *effectual Deſire* to *recommend* ourſelves to the *Favour*, *Approbation*, and *Bleſſing* of that Being whom we eſteem. If the Love of God be conſidered merely as a *ſacred Eſteem* for him, 'tis in a great Meaſure diſintereſted. For Intereſt may indeed teach us to *ſpeak* a Language foreign to our Heart: But we cannot really *eſteem* any Perſon, till we *think* him worthy of our Eſteem; and then 'tis that *Thought*, not *Intereſt*, which is productive of

of our Eſteem. 'Tis then the natural Re- SER. XV.
ſult of a ſerious Conſideration, that he is a Being, in whom there reſides a full Aſſemblage of each lovely and endearing Quality, without the leaſt jarring Mixture of any Thing harſh, cruel or tyrannical in his Nature; that he wills the Happineſs of each Individual in the Creation, as far as 'tis conſiſtent with his particular Rank and Station in the Scale of Beings, and the Good of the Univerſe in general. When a Man has inured himſelf to ſuch a juſt and right Way of thinking upon the Deity; He cannot help loving, in the Senſe of Eſteem, what appears, upon repeated Views, ſo lovely to his Underſtanding. He cannot help loving him, whom he believes to be, what St. *John* has repreſented him, *Love* itſelf, pure, unallayed Love, without any Tincture of Caprice, Malice, or Ill-Nature.

For to whatever Cauſe ſuch a Connexion of Ideas was originally owing, yet in Fact the Ideas of Goodneſs and Eſteem are in moſt Minds inſeparably connected. The Union ſeems almoſt neceſſary. If it were an early Aſſociation, 'tis ſuch an Aſſociation as cannot eaſily, if at all, be broken.

But if the Love of God be conſidered not only as a mere Eſteem for Him, but what it undoubtedly, and principally is, an hearty and effectual Deſire to recommend ourſelves to his Love, Favour and Approbation; the Love of God ſo far at leaſt is intereſted; and, though we may *eſteem* him for what he is *in Himſelf*, yet we deſire to *approve* ourſelves to Him, in Expectation of what he will do *for us*.

For what rational End or Motive could there be to endeavour to pleaſe a Being, who would neither ſhew his Pleaſure by rewarding the Obedient, or expreſs his Diſpleaſure by puniſhing the Obnoxious? Thoſe, that make the Love of God diſintereſted, drop the moſt *material* and *eſſential* Part of it, that very Part, which chiefly makes it a practical Principle, operating upon our Hearts, and productive of Holineſs in our Lives; and give us a lame and imperfect Account of it.

For Love is not only a cold ſedentary Eſteem, which, like *Faith without Works, is dead:* 'Tis an active Principle, which prompts us to ſecure an Intereſt, and cultivate a Friendſhip, with the Being beloved; and to feel a delightful Self-Complacency; when

when we pleaſe, or imagine we pleaſe Him. SER. XV.
It is a *Compound*, of an *Eſteem* for Him ariſing from an Apprehenſion of his Excellencies, and a *Deſire* to be made happy by him here and hereafter. Had we no Deſire or Expectations to be made happy by him, we ſhould not ſerve him at all: And had we no Eſteem for Him, did we not entertain the lovelieſt Impreſſions of Him; we ſhould not ſerve Him with Pleaſure. *Dry* and *abſtracted* Reaſons of Love to God operate very faintly; except we take into the Account the *affecting* Conſiderations of his being our Creator, Redeemer, Preſerver and Benefactor. His *internal* and *eſſential* Excellency may command our Admiration, fling us into Aſtoniſhment, and convince the *Underſtanding* that we ought to reverence him: But his *relative* Dignity, his making, ſupporting, and redeeming us, touch the inmoſt Springs of the Mind, call forth each liberal Movement of the Soul, and powerfully work upon our *Wills* and *Affections*, the active Principles in our Compoſition.

If it be objected, that we cannot love a Being that is inviſible; I anſwer, that, what we chiefly love in viſible Beings of

Ser. XV. our own Kind, is always ſomething inviſible. Whence ariſes the Reliſh of Beauty in our own Species? Do we love it merely, as it is a certain Mixture of Proportion and Colours? No: For, though theſe are to be taken into the Account as two material Ingredients; yet ſomething elſe is wanting, to beget our Love; ſomething, that *animates* the Features, and *beſpeaks* a *Mind* within. Otherwiſe, we might fall in Love with a mere Picture, or any lifeleſs Maſs of Matter, that was entertaining to the Eye. We might be as ſoon ſmitten with a dead, uninformed, unmeaning Countenance, where there is an exact Symmetry and Regularity of Features; as with thoſe Faces, which are enlivened by a certain Chearfulneſs, ennobled by a certain Majeſty, or endeared by a certain Complacency diffuſed over their whole Mien. Is not this therefore the chief Foundation of our Taſte for Beauty, that it giveth us, as we think, ſome outward Notices of noble, benevolent, and valuable Qualities in the Mind? Thus a Sweetneſs of Mien and Aſpect charms the more, becauſe we look upon it as an Indication of a much ſweeter Temper within: It is the habitual Diſpoſition of the Soul,

appearing through, and impreſſed upon, the Features. The Face is often, though not always, the Index of the Mind; and thoſe Ideas, to which the Soul is moſt habituated, leave behind them certain Traces and Impreſſions on the Countenance. Now if this be the chief (I do not ſay it is the only) Source of our Taſte for Beauty, that it exhibits to us ſome Signatures of inward Benevolence, Generoſity and Worth, which, after all, are very *uncertain*, and *only preſumptive* Evidences of the internal Temper; why have we not the moſt affectionate Love for that Being, the Traces of whoſe Benevolence, Bounty and Greatneſs, are imprinted upon the Univerſe in *bright*, *legible*, and *undeniable* Characters?

In a Word, though the *Deity* cannot be ſeen, numerous *Inſtances* of his *Goodneſs* are *viſible* throughout the Frame of Nature: And where-ever they are ſeen, they naturally *command* our *Love*. But we cannot love Goodneſs *abſtractedly* from ſome Being, in which it is ſuppoſed to inhere: For *that* would be to love an *abſtract Idea*. Hitherto indeed it is only the Love of *Eſteem*: The Tranſition, however, from *That*, to a Love of *Enjoyment*, or a Deſire of being

Ser. XV. our own Kind, is always ſomething inviſible. Whence ariſes the Reliſh of Beauty in our own Species? Do we love it merely, as it is a certain Mixture of Proportion and Colours? No: For, though theſe are to be taken into the Account as two material Ingredients; yet ſomething elſe is wanting, to beget our Love; ſomething, that *animates* the Features, and *beſpeaks* a *Mind* within. Otherwiſe, we might fall in Love with a mere Picture, or any lifeleſs Maſs of Matter, that was entertaining to the Eye. We might be as ſoon ſmitten with a dead, uninformed, unmeaning Countenance, where there is an exact Symmetry and Regularity of Features; as with thoſe Faces, which are enlivened by a certain Chearfulneſs, ennobled by a certain Majeſty, or endeared by a certain Complacency diffuſed over their whole Mien. Is not this therefore the chief Foundation of our Taſte for Beauty, that it giveth us, as we think, ſome outward Notices of noble, benevolent, and valuable Qualities in the Mind? Thus a Sweetneſs of Mien and Aſpect charms the more, becauſe we look upon it as an Indication of a much ſweeter Temper within: It is the habitual Diſpoſition of the Soul,

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SER. XV. made happy by him, is quick and eaſy; For, the more lovely Ideas we entertain of any Being; the more deſirous we ſhall be to do his Pleaſure, and procure his Favour.

Having thus ſhewn the Foundation of our Love to God, I proceed, II*dly*, To ſtate the Degree, and point out the Meaſure of our Love to Him.

In order to which, it will be neceſſary to fix the Senſe of the Words of my Text with ſome Accuracy. Becauſe from Them, ſuch a Degree of Love to God has been pleaded for, as is inconſiſtent with any ſubordinate Deſires of inferior Things. The Meaning of theſe Words, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength*; is, that we are to ſerve God with all thoſe Faculties, which he has given us: Not that the Love of God is to be excluſive of all *other* Loves; but of all other *Rival* Affections; that, whenever the Love of God and that of the World come in Competition, the former undoubtedly ought to take place of the latter. According to that of our Saviour: *He that loveth Father and Mother* more

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than me, is not worthy of me: And again, *Seek ye* firſt *the Kingdom of God*; which ſuppoſes, that other Things may be ſought after in their proper Rank and Order, without an *undue Preference.* We are not to deſire nothing at all *but* him, we are only, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, to deſire nothing in *Compariſon with* him. Viſionary Writers, who have ſequeſtred themſelves from the World, may attempt to prove, that all our Love ought to center in the Deity *excluſively:* But ſuch Romantic Notions are unintelligible in Theory, and in Fact impracticable. They convince us of Nothing, but this: That thoſe, whoſe Underſtandings are *over-refined* and *ſubtle*, are guilty of as great Errors; as Thoſe, whoſe *Underſtandings are waxed Groſs*; and that 'tis hard to tell, whether Men miſtake oftner by *not* exerting their Abilities; or by ſtretching them *beyond* their *Line*, beyond their determinate Sphere. If the one grovel on the Ground; the other are continually ſoaring into the Clouds, quite beyond the View of common Senſe. Inſtead of ſeeing all Things in the Deity, as ſome have fancied; we diſcern plain Proofs of the Deity in all Things; there being nothing in

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Ser. XV. Nature, of which we can give á plauſible Account, without calling in the Deity to our Aid. We have no direct and immediate View of him, as He is in Himſelf; We *ſee* him *through a Glaſs*, through the Mirrour of the Creation. And if there were nothing lovely, and conſequently the Object of our Love in the Creature; we could have no Grounds to love the Creator. The Love of the Creator therefore implies the Love of the Creation. Not being able to ſee Him *Face to Face*, we love Him in his *Works*, the Repreſentatives, the faint Repreſentatives of his original Lovelineſs. Accordingly, St. *John* ſays: *If any Man love not his Brother, whom he hath ſeen; how can he love God, whom he hath not ſeen?* That is: The viſible Creation, and Man, the Maſterpiece of the viſible Creation, being the only Mediums, through which we diſcern the Lovelineſs of God, repreſented and reflected to us; if we have a ſplenetic Hatred and Diſreliſh for *them*, How can we entertain any Love for the *Maker* of them, of whom we can know nothing, but *by* and *through* them? They are the Steps and Scales, by which we muſt aſcend, in the laſt Reſort, to the Love of him, from whom

whom they derive, and to whom we muſt aſcribe whatever is good in them. To love God therefore with all our Heart, is ſo far from excluding all inferior Complacencies, that it neceſſarily comprehends them. Our Love muſt begin with the Creature, and end in Him: We muſt love, as well as argue, upwards from the Effect to the Cauſe; and becauſe there are ſeveral Things deſireable even here under proper Regulations, conclude that He, the Maker of them, ought to be the ſupreme, not the only, Object of our Deſires. We cannot love God in Himſelf, without loving him, *in* and *for* his Works. SER. XV.

What the Scriptures require, is eaſy to be underſtood; and not impoſſible to be practiſed, *viz.* That our Gratitude to God, and our Love of Him, ought to have the Aſcendant, and to be the *governing* Principle; and that all other Regards ought to be ſubordinate to it. The main Deſign of Chriſtianity is, that we ſhould look upon worldly Things with the Indifference of a Traveller, whoſe *chief* Views are fixed upon his Journey's End, upon his abiding Country.

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The Words of my Text may be more minutely explained thus. *To love the Lord with all our Heart*, ſignifies to love Him with all Sincerity, with an undiſſembled Affection. For in this Senſe, the Word is often uſed in Scripture. Thus *Iſaiah: This People draweth nigh unto me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from me*, i. e. They are not affectionate and ſincere in the Service they pay me. As ſome have ſtrained this Duty too high, others have ſunk it much too low, and made the Love of God, and the keeping of his Commandments, to be the very ſame Thing. Whereas to love God is not merely to do, what He commands; but it is to do it, becauſe He commands it. God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, does not value any outward Homage, where the Heart is not intereſted.

To love God with all our Soul, ſignifies to ſerve him with the *whole* Soul, with an *unreſerved*, and not with a partial Obedience. God is not to ſhare a *divided* Affection in our Breaſt, an Affection divided between Piety and Sin: But he is to reign unrivalled by any darling Vice. *To love God then with all our Soul*, is the ſame as to *have Reſpect unto all his Commandments.*

For it is no Proof of our Love to God, that we obey him only, when our Paſſions do not draw a *different* Way: Then is our *Heart right and whole with Him*, when our Duty gets the better over any corrupt Inclination, which interferes with it. We are not to parcel out our Affections between Piety and Sin: Then is our Affection like a large Diamond, moſt valuable when it remains intire and unbroken, without being cut out into a Multitude of independent and disjointed Parts.

To *love the Lord with all our Strength*, is to put forth the active Powers of the Soul in loving and ſerving Him. It is to rouſe ourſelves from that Supineneſs and liſtleſs Idleneſs, which is far more painful than a continued Hurry and Multiplicity of Buſineſs, without any Reſpite. It is to quicken the Wheels and Springs of Action, that moved on heavily before: It is to do well, without being weary of well-doing. It is to lay out our Endeavours, that we may have a competent Senſe to diſcern, a ſincere Inclination to embrace, and a ſteady Reſolution to hold faſt, what is beſt and moſt pleaſing to the Deity.

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The Sum of what I would ſay is this. That to *love God with all our Heart*, is to obey him ſincerely and affectionately: *To love him with all our Souls, and with all our Minds*, is to obey him intirely and unreſervedly: And *to love him with all our Strength*, is to obey Him vigorouſly and conſtantly.

The Love of God is a ſettled, well-grounded, rational Delight in Him, founded upon Conviction and Knowledge. It is ſeated in the Underſtanding, and therefore not neceſſarily accompanied with any briſker Agitations of Spirit; though indeed the Body may keep Pace with the Soul, and the Spirits flow in a more ſprightly Torrent to the Heart; when we are affected by any advantageous Repreſentation of God, or by a Reflection on his Bleſſings. This I thought neceſſary to obſerve; becauſe ſome weak Men of a ſanguine Complexion are apt to be elated upon the Account of thoſe ſhort-lived Raptures and tranſient Gleams of Joy, which they feel within themſelves; and others of a phlegmatic Conſtitution to deſpond: Becauſe they cannot work themſelves up to ſuch a Degree of Fervor. Whereas nothing is more precarious and

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uncertain, than that Affection, which depends upon the Ferment of the Blood: It naturally ceaſes, as ſoon as the Spirits flag, and are exhauſted. Men of this Make ſometimes draw near to God with great Fervency; and at other Times are quite eſtranged from Him; like thoſe great Bodies, which make very near Approaches to the Sun, and then all at once fly off to an unmeaſurable Diſtance from the Source of Light. You meet a Perſon at ſome happy Time, when his Heart overflows with Joy and Complacency: He makes you warm Advances of Friendſhip, he gives you Admittance to the inmoſt Secrets of his Soul, and prevents all Solicitation, by offering, unaſked, thoſe Services, which you, in this ſoft and gentle Seaſon of Addreſs, might have been encouraged to aſk: Wait but till this Fluſh of Good Humour and Flow of Spirits is over, and you will find all this Overwarmth of Friendſhip ſettle into Coldneſs and Indifference: and himſelf as much differing from himſelf, as any other Perſon can from another: Whereas a Perſon of a ſerious Frame and Compoſure of Mind, *conſiſtent* with *himſelf*, and therefore *conſtant* to *you*, goes on, without any alternate Heats

SER. XV. Heats and Colds in Friendſhip, in an uninterrupted Tenor of ſerving, and obliging his Friend. Which of theſe two is more valuable in himſelf, and acceptable to you? The Anſwer is very obvious. Juſt ſo a Vein of ſteady, regular, conſiſtent Piety, is more acceptable to that Being, *with whom there is no Variableneſs, neither Shadow of Change*; than all the paſſionate Sallies, and ſhort intermitting Fits, of an unequal Devotion.

Truly to love God is not then to have a few warm Notions about the Deity fluttering a while in the Breaſt, and afterwards leaving it void and empty of Goodneſs. But it is to have the Love of God *dwelling* in us. It is not a Religious Mood or Humour, but a Religious Temper. It is not to be now and then pleaſed with our Maker in the Gaiety of the Heart, when, more properly ſpeaking, we are pleaſed with ourſelves. It is not to have a few occaſional tranſient Acts of Complacency and Delight in the Lord riſing in our Minds, when we are in a Vein of Good Humour, as the Seed in the Parable ſoon ſprung up, and ſoon withered away, becauſe it *had no Root and Deepneſs of Earth*: But it is to have

have a laſting, habitual and determinate Reſolution to pleaſe the Deity rooted and grounded in our Hearts, and influencing our Actions throughout. SER. XV.

III *dly*, I proceed to examine, how far the Fear of the Deity is conſiſtent with the Love of Him.

There is Mercy with thee, therefore ſhalt thou be feared, is a Paſſage in the Pſalms very beautiful, as well as very appoſite to our preſent Purpoſe. It is the Secret of fine Writing to make our Thoughts *natural* without being *common* or too *obvious*; and *ſurpriſing* without being *affected*. And here we have an admirable Exemplification of this Rule. The Thought is *ſurpriſing*; becauſe it was obvious to think, the Sentence ſhould have concluded thus: *There is Mercy with thee*, therefore ſhalt thou be *loved*: And yet it is *natural* too; ſince we ſhall be *afraid* to draw upon ourſelves *his Diſpleaſure*, whom we ſincerely *love*. The more we have an Affection for him, the more we ſhall dread a Separation from him. Love, though it caſteth out all *ſervile* Fear, yet does not exclude ſuch a Fear, as a dutiful Son ſhews to a very affectionate

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fectionate, but a very wiſe and prudent Father: And we may *rejoice in God with Reverence*, as well as *ſerve him with Gladneſs*. For Love, if not allayed and tempered with Fear, and the Apprehenſions of Divine Juſtice, would betray the Soul into a ſanguine Confidence and an ill-grounded Security: Fear, on the other Hand, if not ſweetned and animated by Love, would ſink the Mind into a fatal Deſpondency. Fear therefore is placed in the Soul, as a Counterpoiſe to the more enlarged, kindly and generous Affections. It is in the human Conſtitution, what Weights are to ſome Machines, very neceſſary to adjuſt, regulate and balance the Motion of the fine, curious and active Springs.

Happy the Man, who can command ſuch a juſt and even Poiſe of theſe two Affections; that the one ſhall do nothing, but *deter* him from *offending*, while the other *inſpirits* him with a hearty Deſire of *pleaſing* the Deity. Yet, which ſoever of them we may imagine to be the prevailing Principle; he who proceeds in a ſteady regular Practice of his Duty to God, without any preſumptuous and deliberate Sins, may diſmiſs all Apprehenſions, and Miſgivings, con-

concerning his Salvation. It is true, *God is Love*; and he, that obeys Him, muſt *obey* Him in *Love*: But it is as true, that, where-ever there is a ſincere and uniform Obedience, upon Principle, there is ſuch a Degree of Love, as will render us acceptable to God. For *in this we know, that we love God, if we keep his Commandments.* A mere ſervile Fear indeed may be a Bar to our Salvation. But what is a *mere* ſervile Fear? Such a Fear, as clogs the Powers, and deadens the Activity of the Soul, by ſhutting out the Conſideration of God's fatherly Goodneſs, and dwelling only on That of Almighty Power armed with Vengeance: Such a Fear, as the unprofitable Servant, in the Parable of the Talents, entertained of his Maſter, whom he miſrepreſented, as an *auſtere* Being, *gathering where he had not ſtrewed, and reaping where he had not ſown*; for which Reaſon he remained in a State of Inaction, and *hid his Talent in a Napkin.* It is ſuch a Fear as the Devils have, who *believe, tremble*, yet never obey; one genuine *Blackneſs of Darkneſs*, without the leaſt Glimpſe of Comfort. It is a Religious Cowardice, which robs us of the Power of ſhunning thoſe Dangers, which we dread. But

SER. XV. But a Fear, which is productive of an even ſtedfaſt Habit of Obedience, is always a filial Fear, recommended and endeared by an acceptable Mixture and Proportion of Love. For, *till* a ſlaviſh Dread *damps* each *lovely* Idea, and *blots* out each *liberal* Thought of the Deity, our *Love* of Him is *not extinguiſhed:* And *when* a ſlaviſh Dread has *eraſed* theſe Impreſſions, then our *Obedience*, as well as Love, muſt *ceaſe* of Courſe. The Mind will ſtoop beneath the Burthen, and ſink overwhelmed with a Load of Deſpair. It is, methinks, impoſſible that any Man ſhould habitually, in the Main, and conſcientiouſly diſcharge his Duty to the *Father of Mercies and God of Comforts*, who is able and willing to do for him *abundantly above what he can aſk or think*, without eſteeming, honouring and loving Him. He may indeed at firſt obey Him only, becauſe it is his Duty to ſerve the greateſt of Beings, whoſe Power *ruleth over all:* But he will ſooner or later obey Him likewiſe, becauſe it is his Inclination to ſerve the beſt of Beings, whoſe *Mercy is over all his Works.* Suppoſe a Man loſt in a great Meaſure to all ingenuous Motives, yet, perſuaded by the Ter-

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rors of the Lord, to break off his Sins by Repentance; he could not effectually ſet about this Work without *ſome* Regard to God's *amiable* Attributes, without *ſome Confidence* in his *Goodneſs*, which always implies ſome Degree of Love. He may fear Him, as an *Avenger to execute Wrath* upon the Impenitent; but he muſt confide in Him too, as one that is not willing any ſhould be impenitent; not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould fulfil the Terms, and enjoy the Benefit of eternal Salvation. And, though Fear chiefly was the *Beginning* of his *Wiſdom*; yet long Practice of Virtue will ripen into an Habit; and a ſettled Habit will give him a Reliſh for Acts of Virtue; till at laſt he *taſtes and ſees how gracious the Lord is*, who has abridged him of no Pleaſure, but what a diſcreet and loving Father would with-hold from his only Son; and enjoined him no Duty, but what is eſſential to, and interwoven with, his Happineſs. He will at laſt love to ſerve Him, whoſe Service he experiences to be perfect Freedom. For good Men go on from Strength to Strength without confining themſelves to any deter-

SER. XV. mined Proportion of Goodneſs, beyond which they are to proceed no farther.

To a conſiderate Mind, that is all Harmony within, that is in perfect Good-Humour with every Thing about it; the Deity muſt appear like what he is, *in perfect Beauty*; all-loving, and all-lovely, without any forbidding and frightning Appearances: Juſt as a deep Stream, when clear and unruffled by any Storm, repreſents the Sun and Firmament in a gentler and milder Luſtre; far more beautiful itſelf, by reflecting the Beauties of Heaven. Whatever uncomfortable Notices we entertain of God, they are either the juſt Forebodings of a Mind diſturbed with Guilt; or the gloomy Imagery of a Fancy deeply tinctured with Melancholy. A vigorous Progreſs in Virtue will remove that horrible Dread of the Deity, which ſometimes overwhelms the Minds of the Guilty.

To conclude,

Do we act in Concert with that Being, whoſe tender Mercy is over all *his* Works, by ſhewing Mercy, as far as we can, in all *ours*?

Do we conſcientiouſly endeavour to diſcharge all the Duties he has enjoined us, with-

without Reluctance; and to ſubmit to all his Diſpenſations, without Murmuring? SER. XV.

Do we addreſs ourſelves to Him with that holy Fear, which awes the turbulent Paſſions into Compoſure; but does not depreſs the Spirit, or beget an abject and unmanly Way of Thinking?

Do we, who look (or ought to look) up to Him with Reverence, as the great *Judge* and *Lawgiver* of the Univerſe; chiefly *delight* to conſider Him under the endearing Characters of a *Creator*, *Redeemer*, *Preſerver* and *Benefactor?*

Do we, before we compoſe ourſelves to Sleep, recommend ourſelves to his Almighty Care, *who neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps?* Do we, as ſoon as we riſe, recommend ourſelves to his Superintendency, who *maketh his Sun to riſe upon the juſt and unjuſt*; humbly deſiring, that, as that Sun diſpels the Darkneſs and unwholeſom Vapours of the Night; ſo He, the great *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, who *aroſe with Healing in his Wings*, would drive us from all Evil; all Evil, whether of Mind, Body, or Eſtate?

Do we commit all our Concerns in *general* to his Providence, and fatherly Goodneſs; and upon every *extraordinary* Emergency,

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gency, make a more particular Application to Him for his Direction, *who never faileth them that ſeek Him?*

If we do, theſe undoubtedly are the only genuine Teſts, and ſignificant Expreſſions of an undiſſembled Love to God: And they will procure for us the bleſſed Effects of that infinite Love, which being *ſtronger than Death*, diſarmed Death of it's Sting, and the Grave of it's Victory.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

On the Foundation of Morality.

In two SERMONS.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD.*

COLOSSIANS III. 23.

Whatſoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto Men.

THESE Words, though addreſſed by St. *Paul* to Servants, contain Matter of Advice to All Chriſtians, as *knowing, that, whatever Good any Man doth, the ſame he ſhall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* We are commanded to *ſet God before us*; to *be holy, becauſe He is holy*; and therefore, *whatſoever* we *do*, we are

SER. XVI. to *do it as to* him, who can discern each inward Grace of the Soul through the Veil of Modesty, and see each hidden Vice through the Mask of Hypocrisy. I shall therefore make it my Business, in what follows,

I*st*, To prove that a Regard to the Deity is the Foundation of Morality.

II*dly*, To enquire into the Characters and Motives of those, who, though Strangers to Piety and Devotion, yet pretend to be animated with the most exalted Sentiments of Probity, Generosity and Benevolence.

I*st*, I am to prove that a Regard to the Deity is the Foundation of Morality.

There can be no Virtue in Actions *materially* good, Actions which we *chanced*, but did not *mean* to do. No, to stamp the sacred Character of Virtue upon our Performances, the *Intention* of the Agent must be taken into the Account. It is this *inward* Principle, that must make our Services grateful to the Deity; as it is the *Presumption* of this, that makes them so to our Fellow-Creatures. Thus it is the

preſumed Intention of the Giver, which chiefly recommends the Gift. *Silver and Gold* ſome may *have* little or *none*; but whatever they *take* in *Hand*, they *turn* into *Gold*: They beautify, whatever they do, by a frank, ingenuous and hearty Manner of doing it. Man, however, can only judge of us from our *outward* Actions and Demeanour; and, as long as we are artful enough to ſave *Appearances*, we are no farther accountable to him: *He* alone can effectually bind and oblige the *Heart*, from which all Goodneſs flows; who is alone the great *Searcher* and Diſcerner of our *Hearts*. SER. XVI.

Virtue is the Obſervance of ſome Law, as Vice is the Tranſgreſſion of it: But there can be no Laws at all without ſome Lawgiver; and there can be no Laws, which ſhall oblige us to cultivate *inward* Merit and Virtue (the only genuine Merit) without a ſacred Regard to *that* Lawgiver, to whom our *inward* Virtue is only cognizable.

We are no further moral Beings, than we are accountable Beings. But to whom or what are we accountable? Not certainly to abſolute Fitneſſes, the Lovelineſs and

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Beauty of Virtue. To be accountable, implies, that we are accountable to ſome *Superior*; which Superior can only be God, or a *divine* Legiſlator: For if we leave a God out of the Scheme, *Human* Legiſlators can never reach the Conſcience, which is a Principle diſcernible only by Him, *from whom no Secrets are hid.* Thus a *conſcientious* Performance of good Actions, in the laſt Reſort, in the laſt Step of the Scale, terminates in Him, who is the Diſpenſer of all Bleſſings, the Center of all Happineſs, and therefore the Object of all Duty. And all the moral Virtues are only ſo many *Cyphers*, which may make an ample Shew, yet are but ſo many *empty* unavailing *Nothings*; unleſs the Deity be placed as the *principal Figure* at the *Head* of them, from whom they derive their Weight, Force and Significancy.

If it be objected, that, though we were not accountable to the *Deity*, yet ſtill we are obliged to cultivate Virtue out of a Regard to *ourſelves*, to the Eaſe, Tranquillity and Satisfaction of our own Minds: I anſwer, that if we could *oblige ourſelves*, then we, who *impoſe* the Obligation on ourſelves, muſt have an equal Power to

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take it *off*, or *diſpenſe* with it, whenever we pleaſe: that, they, who purſue Virtue for the Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, of which it is productive, will be obliged to deviate from it and forſake it, whenever they apprehend that an inflexible Adherence to the Rules of it will bring upon them any great and laſting Inconvenience, Hardſhip and Miſery. Virtue is nothing, but a *rational* Conduct under the Circumſtances, in which we are placed. But, what would be highly *rational*, and conſequently *Virtue* upon the Suppoſition of a *future* State; would be *Madneſs*, and conſequently *not* Virtue, if *That* were left *out* of the Account. Thus to *die* for the Good of one's *Country*, is a beautiful and noble Inſtance of *Virtue*. But it would be the Height of *Enthuſiaſm* in Him, who harbours no Fears, cheriſhes no Hopes, and entertains no Belief of a future State, to part with his *final* Happineſs, his *All*, for *Nothing* in *Reverſion*. SER. XVI.

The *Underſtanding* may diſcern, juſt as it does any *other ſpeculative* Truth, a *natural Fitneſs* or *Unfitneſs*, in Things, *i. e.* That ſome Things have a Tendency to promote, and others to obſtruct, the pub-

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SER XVI. lic Happineſs. But to influence the *Will*, which is the *Seat* of *Morality*; to engage *it* to practiſe what is for the Good of the Whole, to bring Things home to our Boſom; a Regard for that Being, who is *mighty to ſave*, and able to deſtroy, muſt be the governing Principle. For, though the Underſtanding cannot but ſee the natural and eſſential Differences of Things, yet all *Morality* implies *Choice*: And Nothing can make, what is *naturally* fit or productive of public Happineſs, the Object of our *ſteady Choice* (at leaſt in *all* Caſes) but the *Will* of *that* Being, who only can make the Love of *ourſelves* and the Love of the *Public* to *coincide without* any *Interference*. We muſt carefully diſtinguiſh between ſpeculative *abſtract* Truths, and moral or *practical* Truths. The former may be independent on the Will of our Creator; but the latter (*viz.* Truths reducible to Practice) muſt be founded on a Senſe of Duty to Him, who alone can enforce the Obſervance of them. For nothing can oblige us, but a View to our own Happineſs. Now all our Happineſs depends upon God. He therefore alone can lay an effectual Obligation upon us, who alone can make

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our Happineſs or Miſery commenſurate to the Extent of our Being. SER. XVI.

We have had a World of popular Harangues upon the abſtract Beauty and intrinſic Valuableneſs of Virtue. Now there is no ſuch Thing as *Valuableneſs* or Worth *diſtinct* from *Uſefulneſs:* Nothing being valuable any farther, than it is uſeful. For what is a Thing valuable for, that is of no Uſe? And nothing is any farther valuable to any Man than as it promotes *his* Happineſs. For what will neither give him Pleaſure nor Pain, he muſt be intirely unaffected by; and what he is intirely unaffected by, to that he muſt be indifferent. And, after all our ſpecious Refinements, *Virtue* muſt be built upon Intereſt, our *Intereſt* upon the *Whole.* Nay the more we endeavour to *abſtract from* Self; the more Self will *return:* For the more we ſet apart all ſelfiſh Views; the greater will be our Self-Complacency, or the more we ſhall be pleaſed with ourſelves. There are two Kinds of Pleaſure, the one ariſing from pleaſing *Senſations*, the other from delightful *Reflections* on our Conduct. He who denies himſelf the *former* (which are the *coarſer*) Gratifications, is often *over-paid* by the *latter*,

SER. XVI. *latter*, but much more *elegant* Enjoyments.

I know it will be objected that Virtue may be ſtill diſintereſted: For though the Pleaſure ariſing from agreeable Reflections may be the Conſequence of a virtuous Courſe of Life; yet it is not the Cauſe of it: which is a moral inſtinctive Senſe, whereby we love what is good, and abhor what is evil, antecedently to any Act of the Underſtanding, or Reflection upon the Conſequences of our Actions. Now, ſuppoſing the Genuineneſs of this moral Senſe or Inſtinct, which ſeveral excellent Writers * have diſputed; ſuppoſing, what is moſt unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that we need not *apprehend* or *underſtand* a Thing to be *lovely*, *before* we *love* it as ſuch; that we need not *judge* a Thing to be *hateful*, *previouſly* to our *Hatred* of it; ſuppoſing our Love of Virtue and Hatred of Vice to be originally blind Propenſions and occult Qualities: Yet a Virtue or Goodneſs, which proceeds wholly and ſole-

* See what three very ingenious and conſiderable Authors have wrote on this Head, *viz.* the *Minute Philoſopher* in his third Dialogue, *Philemon* to *Hydaſpes*, Part the Second, and Mr. *Law* in his Preliminary Diſſertation to *King* on the *Origin of Evil*.

ly from this moral Senſe or Inſtinct, is not *our* Virtue or Goodneſs; but that of our *Creator*, who has implanted this Inſtinct. To make it, in any Degree, *ours*, we muſt *improve* upon the moral Senſe, we muſt *cultivate*, *cheriſh* and *ripen* it: We muſt not impair, weaken and extinguiſh; but quicken and *ſtir* up this *Gift of God*, that is ſuppoſed to be in us. And then the Queſtion will return, What Obligation we are under to do ſo? And no other can be aſſigned, but the Pleaſure, that is immediately conſequent to it; or the endleſs Happineſs of the next World: So that, even upon this Suppoſition, Virtue, *as far* as it is *ours*, that is, as far as it is Virtue, muſt be reſolved into the *intereſted* Scheme. He, who obſerves the Rules of Morality for the Sake of temporal Pleaſures, will never perform any Act of Duty that is highly diſtaſteful to him, or forego any Vice that is pleaſant and palatable. The only ſure Ground-Work of Morality is therefore the Proſpect of heavenly Bliſs. SER. XVI.

But farther; If we cloſely attend to the Operations of our Mind, and carefully obſerve what paſſeth within us, at that very Inſtant, when we are doing a charitable or friendly

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friendly Office; I am apt to think we ſhould find, that the Pleaſure, which reſults from it, ariſes either from a Senſe, that, what we are doing, may procure us the *Approbation* of Men; or it proceeds from a Senſe of having done our Duty, and recommended ourſelves to the *Favour* of the *Deity*. Our Benevolence, as far as it is owing to the *former*, is not Virtue, but a Deſire of *Fame* and Diſtinction; as far as it is owing to the *latter*, it is *Virtue*, but Virtue *founded* upon the *Love* of God. Joy undoubtedly, like the Light of the Sun, never rebounds ſo ſtrongly back again upon ourſelves, as when it comes reflected to us from other Objects. The groſſer Pleaſures ſoon flatten upon the Senſe, and grow inſipid to a well-turned Mind: But then we feel the moſt exquiſite and delicate, as well as moſt laſting Touches of Pleaſure, when we communicate it, in any great Degree, to thoſe about us. Yet that Pleaſure, which is annexed to any generous and worthy Deed, may be compared to it's Oppoſite, *viz.* that Remorſe, which is conſequent to Wickedneſs. And it may be queſtioned, whether we ſhould have any (or at leaſt any permanent) Remorſe, after having committed

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an ill Action; if we were ſure we could ſence off all ill Conſequences, and neither be expoſed to the Scorn and Hatred of the World, nor draw upon ourſelves the divine Vengeance. Juſt ſo it may admit of a Diſpute, whether the Pleaſure we are ſpeaking of would not vaniſh; if we apprehended, that neither Mankind would commend and eſteem us, nor the Deity reward us for our Goodneſs. It muſt be owned, that the Succeſſion of our Thoughts is ſometimes very quick, and the Tranſition from one to another very ſudden: The Senſations of Pleaſure are generally confuſed; and the more exquiſite any Pleaſure is, the more confuſed and indiſtinct our Thoughts are at that Time. And I would deſire thoſe, who frequently do good Actions, minutely, and curiouſly to obſerve, whether there does not accompany them ſome confuſed and tranſient Glance of Thought, which will ſoon be loſt and eſcape their Notice, if inattentive; that they act under the Eye and Inſpection of the Deity, who, as he is every where preſent, cannot but ſee what they do; and, as he is infinitely good, cannot but behold it with Pleaſure: or whether the Goodneſs of their Actions, is not allayed by

Ser. XVI. by ſome ſiniſter Motives of Vain-Glory. But ſuppoſing the Pleaſure ariſes from neither of theſe Conſiderations; yet it can only, as I obſerved before, induce us to go on in the Paths of Virtue when they are ſmooth and even; if other Motives are ſet aſide, we may deviate from them, when they are rugged, ſteep and arduous.

It is in vain to attempt, as ſome have done, to build Morality on the Ruins of Religion, and to propoſe a Scheme of it independent on future Rewards and Puniſhments, with nothing to ſupport it, but abſolute Fitneſſes and a Taſte for intellectual Beauty, Comelineſs and Proportion. For *Morality* being deſigned for the Practice of *all* Mankind, muſt be built upon ſuch *Notions* as lye *level* to the *Capacities* of Men in general; and founded upon ſuch *Motives*, as may *affect all* Mankind: And thoſe Motives, which addreſs themſelves to our *Hopes* and *Fears*, the two great Springs which actuate human Nature, effectually do this: But *high-flown* Theories about the *diſintereſted Lovelineſs* of Virtue are calculated only for ſome *few* ſelect Spirits, if for *them*. *Exalted* Speculations of too fine a Thread and Texture are like very *coſtly Ornaments* and very *ex-*

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penſive Delicacies; *Every* Man *cannot command* them, and, God be thanked, *No Man's Neceſſities require* them: Plain common uſeful Notions are like our *daily Bread* and Nouriſhment, *All* ſtand in *need* of them, and *All* may *procure* them with a moderate Share of *Labour* and Application. SER. XVI.

Let us, however, proceed to ſhew, what Effect it is likely theſe fine Notions would have firſt upon Men of Speculation, and ſecondly upon Men of the World. As to the firſt,

It is much eaſier to *conceive* a thouſand beautiful Thoughts concerning Virtue in our Cloſet; than to put one of them in *Practice*: Becauſe Thoughts, Thoughts beautiful in Speculation, are the Work of the *Imagination*, which is as much delighted with a lovely *Idea*, as the *Eye* is with a *lovely Object*: But when we would proceed from Theory to Practice, we muſt combat the *ſelfiſh Paſſions*; we muſt get the better of our Indolence and Love of Eaſe, which is apt to grow upon ſpeculative Men. He, whoſe *reigning* Pleaſure it is to *ſpeculate* and *think* beautifully, will *not therefore act* beautifully: Becauſe *Action* calls him *off* from his favourite Pleaſure, that of Speculation: He

SER. XVI. will be averſe to Action, at leaſt all *difficult* Action: which Averſion nothing can conquer, but much ſtronger and more forcible Motives, than thoſe ariſing from the Lovelineſs of Virtue. And hence, I ſuppoſe, it comes to paſs, that thoſe, who have entertained the World and themſelves with theſe lofty Notions, have not been very remarkable for the Practice of the active Virtues. A certain Elegance of Thinking may have reſtrained them from the groſſer Vices of abandoned Senſuality and Intemperance, and they may have obſerved the Rules of Morality, as far as it was pleaſant and agreeable to them; but they have never ſerved their Country, their Neighbours, or themſelves at the Expence of their beloved Eaſe and Repoſe. There ſeems to be a certain *Vis Inertiæ* in *Souls*, as well as in *Bodies*, by which they reſiſt all Change or Alteration of the State, in which they are: And it is a Matter of as much Difficulty to rouſe the Speculative from their Indolence; as it is to check the Career of the Senſual, the Worldly, and the Ambitious: Juſt as it requires as much Force and impreſt Energy to move a Body at Reſt; as it does to ſtop a Body in Motion.

Paſs

Paſs we on from the Men of *Speculation* to the Men of the *World*. Let Virtue *charm never ſo wiſely*, they will *refuſe to hear the Voice of the Charmer*. The Figure of Life, and the polite and elegant Enjoyments of it are to *them*, what intellectual Order, Harmony and Beauty are to the Speculative. Let the Studious rear their viſionary Fabrics in the *Air*; they think it a much more ſubſtantial Pleaſure to erect grand and magnificent Structures on ſolid Ground. Diſcourſe to them, as long as you pleaſe, on the Pleaſure and Comelineſs of well-ordered Affections, and how much better it is to govern the *Paſſions*, than to let them have the Aſcendant. They will anſwer, that they can, with a full Command over themſelves, go on in a *calm* ſedate Purſuit of Wealth and Honour: They can, as ſeveral others have done before them, *without* any *Diſcompoſure* of Mind, drain and impoveriſh the common Current of Good, to fill their own private Canals. They ſcorn as much, as you can, to plunge into the *loweſt Sink* of Vice; what they propoſe, is a ſtudied Luxury and a *Refinement* in *Pleaſure*, to enjoy the preſent criminal Gratifications in ſuch a Manner, as not to deaden by any SER. XVI.

Ser. XVI. Exceſs their Reliſh for the future. The Ideal Excellency of Virtue they look upon as a painted Flame, which may delight the Eye of the Curious, but cannot diſpenſe any active Warmth and Heat; the Dream of idle People, that write in their Cloſets, and the Amuſement of idle People, who read there. But if you can thoroughly convince them, that eternal Miſery will be the Conſequence of a Life ſpent in purſuing forbidden Pleaſure, and amaſſing Wealth by indirect Means; that there is no Salvation without Repentance; and no Repentance without refunding their ill-gotten Wealth: Such a Conſideration preſſed home is like a Mirrour held cloſe to the Lips: if there be the leaſt *Breath* of *ſpiritual* Life remaining in them, it will *catch* it and ſhew it; it will have ſome Effect, if they be not utterly incorrigible.

We ſhall never follow Virtue effectually till we cleave to it with full Purpoſe of Heart; with the Energy of a reſolved Will; We ſhall never cleave to it with the Energy of a reſolved Will, with the full Bent of our Inclinations, till we are uneaſy without it; we ſhall never be uneaſy without it, till we look upon it as eſſential to our Happineſs,

Happineſs, till we conſider ourſelves as undone *without* it for ever, but by it Heirs of eternal Happineſs. He, that is at Eaſe, will never exert himſelf vigorouſly; but Uneaſineſs is the great Spur to Action. To remove the Preſſure of Uneaſineſs, a Man will apply every Engine; juſt as he would heave off any incumbent Weight, that preſſed him down. Now to make a Man uneaſy in the Abſence of Virtue, and under the Dominion of Vice, ſhall we ſet before him the *Fitneſs* and *Lovelineſs* of Morality; Motives that apply themſelves either to *pure abſtract* Reaſon only, which is a cold ſedentary Principle, or to the *calmer* Affections, which operate but faintly? Or ſhall we call into our Aid, *religious* Conſiderations, the Dread of eternal Vengeance, and the Hopes of endleſs Felicity; Conſiderations, which touch upon every Thing that is moſt dear and valuable to us, and call forth the Workings of Self-Love and the Deſire of Happineſs, the firſt great Wheel of the Soul, to which all the reſt move in Subordination? I do not believe that any Perſon, from the Creation to this Time, has been reclaimed, by the Strength of the former Motives, from a Habit of Vice to that of SER. XVI.

SER. XVI. Virtue; But ſeveral have been in all Ages reformed by the latter.

If the Beauty of Virtue has ſo little Effect upon us in the *calmer* Seaſons of Life; it has ſtill much leſs in the Hour of *Trial* and in the Day of *Adverſity*. What may beautify and embelliſh the Soul in Proſperity, will be of little Service to invigorate and ſtrengthen it under Affliction; like thoſe Perſons, who are the Ornaments of Peace, but are too tender to bear the rough Hardſhips of War, or to ſtand the Shock in the Day of Battle. An *uneaſy Senſation* or a clamorous Appetite will be always too hard for a *fine delightful Reflection*: becauſe it will preſs rudely in, demand to be heard, and break off the ſweet Intercourſe, which we may be holding with ſome beloved Idea. That *delicate Feeling within*, by which we enjoy ourſelves and diſcern the Agreeableneſs of Virtue, will give Way to *another* Feeling of a *boiſterous* Nature, that of Pain for Inſtance. Let us ſuppoſe the intrinſic Worth and abſolute Lovelineſs of Virtue in *itſelf*, *abſtracting* from all the *beneficial* Conſequences and *happy* Effects of Virtue, that is, abſtracting from every Thing *lovely* in Virtue: (For Virtue can be no farther lovely,

lovely, than as it is a Means to Happineſs;) Yet the Lovelineſs of Virtue cannot be a Motive to *all* Men at *any Time*: For ſeveral have no Manner of Notion of it. Nor can it be a Motive to *any* Man at *all Times*: It would have juſt as much Influence upon a Man in deep Diſtreſs, as the beautiful Proſpect of the Rainbow had upon the Perſon, who after a Shipwreck was juſt ſinking into the Deep. "All this, ſays he, "is mighty fine; but what is it to Me "who am periſhing irretrievably?" The Love of Virtue, without Rewards either in Hand or Proſpect, is like the Love of Beauty excluſive of all other Conſiderations. A Lover may form fine luxuriant romantic Scenes in his Imagination; yet all that Aſſemblage of ſoft, tender, delicate Ideas, the Product of a Mind at Eaſe, vaniſhes, as ſoon as Poverty comes upon him, *like an armed Man*. Juſt ſo a Man, at Eaſe in his Circumſtances, or at Leiſure in his Cloſet, may be tranſported with contemplating the Goodlineſs of Virtue: yet the rude Preſſure of Adverſity will ſoon put to the Rout thoſe airy refined Notions, owing to the Enthuſiaſm of an over-heated Fancy, not the Suggeſtions of cool Reaſon, which never ſepa-

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Ser. XVI. rates the Beauty of Virtue from it's Uſefulneſs, which is it's *only* Beauty. Nothing can ſupport a Man in the Practice of his Duty in the Depths of Affliction, but the Conſideration, that the Deity will enjoin nothing as a Duty, by which he ſhall be a Loſer or a Sufferer upon the Whole: that, however his Happineſs and his Duty may be disjoined at preſent; yet the Streams ſhall unite again and flow for ever in the ſame Current. Whether do they act more rationally, who admire Virtue as a fine Piece of Painting or Statuary; or they, who purſue it as the Source of ſolid everlaſting Happineſs? They, who delight in it, juſt as they do in a *fine* Piece of *Painting* or *Statuary*, for it's Beauty: would *part* with it, *when reduced to Poverty*, juſt as they would do with a fine Piece of Painting, to purchaſe the *ſubſtantial Conveniencies* of Life. The Principles of Religion will ſupport Virtue and us, and be, like God, a *preſent Help in Trouble*: But all other Principles, however entertaining at other Times, will, like falſe Friends, forſake us; when we have moſt Need of Them, in the Day of Adverſity.

Though there may be a *natural* Fitneſs or Unfitneſs in Actions, as they have a Tendency

dency to advance or hinder the public Good antecedently to the Will of God; yet their *moral* Fitneſs muſt be founded on his Will, as their only ſure and ſolid Baſis: For Morality ſuppoſes a *determined* Rule of Life and a *fixed* Purſuit of *natural* Fitneſſes. Now He, who purſues what is naturally fit for the Sake of the *greateſt* Good, eternal Felicity, may act *invariably*, becauſe he goes upon the Strength of a *Motive* which *Nothing* can *outweigh*. But He who follows what is naturally fit for the Sake of ſome *temporal* Good, muſt change his Meaſures, when a *greater* Good, inconſiſtent with his Purſuits, offers itſelf. The Rule of right Reaſon in him, who believes no *other* State, would be to procure *all* the *Advantages* and *Pleaſures* he could in *this*: And ſo all the Rules of what we now call Virtue, would be quite inverted. It would be reaſonable to break through *any* or *all* of them to make *Life happy* when we *could*; and it would be reaſonable to *throw up* Life, when we could *not*: Setting the Will of the Deity aſide, we ſhould be ſo far from being under an Obligation to live *well*, that we ſhould not be obliged to live *at all*. Either we muſt ſay, that Virtue is not *univerſally* SER. XVI.

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verſally obligatory at *all* Times and upon *all* Emergencies; not ſomething *fixed, invariable* and *indiſpenſable*, but only *occaſional*; which is contrary to the very *Idea* of *Virtue:* Or we muſt ſay, that we are obliged to practiſe Virtue in all Caſes of *Extremity*, though we ſhall be never the better for our uncomplying *Honeſty*, nay though we be *finally Loſers* by it; which is contrary to common *Senſe:* —Or we muſt found Virtue upon the *Sanctions* and *Will* of the Deity, who alone can make it our *Intereſt* to practiſe Virtue in *all* Caſes, in the loweſt Ebb of Fortune, as well as in an uninterrupted Flow of Proſperity.

I do not, however, place Virtue upon *arbitrary* Will. For arbitrary Will is changeable, and no conſiſtent Rule of Action, which Virtue implies, can take Place upon ſo precarious a Footing. No, Virtue muſt be fixed on the ſure Baſis of God's *immutable* and *neceſſary* Will. For it may be demonſtrated, that the Creator *neceſſarily and immutably wills* the general Happineſs of the Creation. And moral Virtue is, to *chuſe* what is in it's genuine Tendency *productive* of the *general Happineſs*, in *Conformity* to *his* Will, his *unchangeable* Will.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

On the Characters of Thoſe, who pretend to Morality without Religion.

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD.*

COLLOSSIANS III. 23.

Whatſoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto Men.

HAVING in a former Diſcourſe endeavoured, I*ſt*, to aſcertain the Foundation of Morality, and fix it on it's proper Baſis, *viz.* a Regard to the Deity: I now proceed, SER. XVII

II*dly*, To enquire into the Characters and Motives of Thoſe, who though Strangers to Piety and Devotion, yet pretend to be animated

SER. XVII animated with the moſt exalted Sentiments of Benevolence, Humanity and Probity.

It is no eaſy Matter to underſtand, upon what Principles they can act, who make Pretenſions to an exalted Worth; but are unfortunately loſt to all Sentiments of Piety. If they diſbelieve a future State, then to think, that they ſhall ſhortly be, as if they never had been, that they muſt ſoon be ſwallowed up in Annihilation, that bottomleſs Gulph, where all Diſtinctions are loſt, as Rivers in the Ocean; is enough to pall each exalted and noble Thought, and to beget in them a Sullenneſs, Sourneſs and Diſcontent. A Fretfulneſs and Impatience, that will grow upon them, will make them ſo far from *fulfilling the Law by bearing one another's Burthens*, that they will be incapable of bearing their *own*. They muſt deſpiſe themſelves and their Fellow-Creatures as a ſet of inſignificant Reptiles, that are to crawl for a while upon the Face of the Earth, and then to mix with the common Maſs of Things. And as they, who expect no *other* Life, ought to make the *moſt* of *this*, they muſt contract a narrow ſpirited and illiberal Caſt of Thought.

But

But if they believe a future State, How can they have any Taſte and Reliſh for Benevolence; and yet have no Love for that Being, who has *endowed* Morality and *Benevolence* with an exceeding and eternal Reward? On the other hand, what delightful Perceptions muſt it give them to reflect, that at the ſame Time, that they are wiſhing, contriving, and promoting the Happineſs of their Fellow-Creatures; they are *Fellow-Workers* with that great and good Being, who is able and willing to give them as great a Happineſs, as their moſt unbounded Good-Will can wiſh; and far greater, than their narrow Underſtanding can conceive? How muſt their Hearts burn within them, who have ſo fervent a Zeal for Charity, to find, that this *Charity* ſhall *never fail*; that theſe ſhort-lived Inſtances of Friendſhip and Good-Will, which we ſhew to one another here, will be ſucceeded by an uninterrupted Intercourſe of mutual Endearments for ever and ever? And what will moſt heighten their Humanity, will be, to conſider, that we ſhall all be Partakers of the ſame common Happineſs from him, *with* whom is the *Fulneſs of Joy*, and *from* whom continual *Rivers of Pleaſures*

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are ever ſtreaming. It is then abſurd to pretend a *Love* for *Benevolence*; and yet to be regardleſs of the *moſt benevolent* Being, that is. And it is likewiſe abſurd to pretend to love Him, without a ſerious Examination into his Will; never diſmiſſing, what bears that venerable Stamp, without a fair and impartial Hearing of the Evidences for the Truth of it. For, on whomſoever the World may beſtow the Title of *moral* Men; yet an indifferent Careleſſneſs, and a wilful *Neglect* to examine into *his* Will and Pleaſure is *no* Part of *Morality*. Nay his Will, whoſe *Pleaſure* we muſt either *do*, or whoſe *Diſpleaſure* we muſt unavoidably *ſuffer*, ought to be the uppermoſt Conſideration of every Man. Can *he* deſerve the Name of a *good* Man, who does not *ſhew* the *leaſt* Regard to *that* Being, to whom he owes *every* Thing: The Deity being the *Fountain-head* even of thoſe Bleſſings, which are conveyed to him by his Fellow-Creatures, as through ſo many *Channels*?

But is it not, you will ſay, true in Fact, that there are ſeveral of ſtrict Probity, Generoſity and Worth without the leaſt Tincture of Piety? To which I anſwer, ſeveral

have from their Infancy aſſociated the Ideas of Happineſs and Eſteem; of Miſery and Diſgrace. This makes them decline thoſe Actions, which may entail Infamy and Diſgrace upon them; and purſue thoſe, which may beget an Eſteem for them; Eſteem being to them an eſſential Ingredient of Happineſs. They have been taught to ſet an high Value upon themſelves: which high *Value* of themſelves is always, more or leſs, accompanied by a *Suſpicion* or Miſtruſt, that they *over-value* themſelves. For which Reaſon they are impatient to have the favourable Verdict, which they paſs upon themſelves, ſeconded and confirmed by the Approbation of others, and unwilling to do any Thing, that may leſſen them in the Opinion of their Fellow-Creatures. It is then the Deſire of Fame, not the Love of Virtue, which is their Incentive to good Actions. And if we look abroad into the World, we find it thus in Fact. Perſons of this Stamp will ſcorn to do a *little* Thing, through the *Abhorrence* of any Thing, that may make them *cheap* and *contemptible* in the Eye of the World: but they will not ſcruple to commit a *Sin*, upon which the *faſhionable* World has ſtamped a *Credit*, and given

SER. XVII given a *Sanction* to. A Perſon who is *ungrateful*, much more ungrateful to his *Sovereign* Benefactor, muſt be void of every thing, which is *great*, *glorious* and *beautiful* in the Soul. He may indeed be actuated by the Love of *Applauſe*, by *Caprice*, by the prevailing *Mode* and *Faſhion* of the *Age*, in which he lives; but his Mind is too narrow contracted and ungenerous to be ſwayed by any *fixed* and *determined Principle* of *Goodneſs*.

He, who in a public Sphere ſeems to have the Good of his Country much at Heart, ſuperior to all intereſted Views; in private Life blaſts the Honour, wounds the Peace of a deſerving Family, and does that, which he would think ſo unreaſonable, as to warrant the keeneſt Reſentments, if he were the Party injured. You wonder at this motley Mixture in his Character. But why ſhould you expect a Conſiſtency of Life and Manners from him, who has no religious, and therefore no conſiſtent, Principle to act upon? The Caſe is this: What he acts in a *public* Sphere, he acts not as a *Duty incumbent* on Him, but as it *falls in* with his *reigning Paſſion*, his Fondneſs for *Popularity*, and a Deſire to be thought of by Others, as highly

as

as he thinks of himſelf. In *private* Life, when the Eye of the *World* is *no more* upon him, his *ſelfiſh* and *ſordid* Paſſions operate with their *full* Force, and draw him off from that Goodneſs, which he never practiſed for ſubſtantial Reaſons: He hoped, that what he did in privacy, would eſcape the public Notice: But if it took Air, the World, the higher Part of the World, has dignified theſe Vices with the ſpecious Name of Gallantry, given a Countenance to them, and, by the *Commonneſs* of them, leſſened the *popular* Odium againſt them. SER. XVII

I anſwer farther, that there is a Diſtinction to be made between a *complexional* Benevolence, and a *rational* Humanity. The Former depends upon a finer Texture of the Body, a briſker Circulation of the Blood, and Flow of the animal Spirits; and is rather an *Happineſs*, than a Virtue. And it is obſervable, that this Benevolence decays in ſome People, as they advance in Years: Thoſe, who were open to every ſocial and humane Pleaſure, ſometimes grow contracted in old Age, and center every Thing in themſelves; like Rivers freezing in Winter, that before diſpenſed Plenty and Fruitfulneſs all around. The Truth of the Matter is: It

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was only an occaſional Complacency, operating by Fits and Starts, not deeply *rooted* in the *Soul*, but founded on the Temper and *Mechaniſm* of the Body; and therefore *ceaſed* of Courſe, when *that Mechaniſm* was *altered*.

The true genuine uniform Benevolence, which will ſtand the Teſt, muſt be ſeated in the *Soul*, and founded upon *rational* Principles: And the Queſtion is whether there can be ſuch a rational Benevolence, which is *always* the *ſame*, without any Regard to *that* Being, who is the *ſame yeſterday*, *to-day*, *and for ever*. Now Benevolence implies a Diſpoſition to part with ſome Advantages, which we enjoy, in order to promote the Happineſs of our Fellow-Creatures. And in ſo doing, the Man, who is actuated by a Principle of Piety, acts very rationally: What he *gives unto the Poor*, he *lends unto the Lord*, who *will repay* him again. But he, who foregoes his own Enjoyments for the Sake of another, without any Proſpect of a Recompence, muſt love his Neighbour *better* than himſelf, contrary to the Dictates of cool unbiaſſed Reaſon. Though therefore there may be a conſtitutional or natural Generoſity without any

Love of or Regard for the Deity; yet there can be no ſuch Thing as a rational, ſteady and manly Benevolence, without it. For *worldly* Pleaſure, Honour or Convenience can be his only rational Aim, whoſe Views are terminated by *this World.* SER. XVII

There is a *Faſhion* in *Virtues*, as well as in *Vices.* Now *Charity* has the good Luck to be in *Faſhion* at *preſent*: And it happens very fortunately, that an Age and Nation, which *abound in Sin* and Vices of all Kinds, ſhould be diſtinguiſhed by a Virtue, which *covers a Multitude* of Sins. There have been, I know, ſome who without any Appearances of Piety have expended large Sums of Money in Works of Charity. Now, not to examine whether this were owing to a kindly Impulſe of Nature, or to the Deſire of Popularity and Applauſe; let it be obſerved, that whatever they *do* by their *Charity*, they *undo* by the Influences of a *bad Example.* When Perſons in low Life obſerve thoſe, who move in an higher Orb, ſhewing an open Neglect of the Deity; they are too apt to copy after them, and then, having no Fear of God before their Eyes, give a Looſe to thoſe Vices which impoveriſh them and plunge

SER. XVII them into Miſeries of all Kinds. And thus irreligious Men of Rank and Figure *introduce* thoſe very Miſeries by their *Influence*, which they can only *relieve* in *Part* by their *Benevolence*. Nay this very Benevolence, a glaring popular Virtue, makes their Example more dangerous, than if they were *conſummately* wicked: Juſt as, according to the *Moſaic* Law, a Man that was leprous only in Part, was more to be avoided; than He, whoſe Body was entirely overſpread with the Leproſy. For a Man *deſperately* wicked raiſes in us an *Abhorrence*, and is a Kind of *Antidote* to Vice: But when *good* as well as *bad* Ingredients enter into the Compoſition of the ſame Man; it is to be feared, that his *ſhining* Qualities, and eſpecially ſo ſhining an one as Humanity, will give a *Luſtre* to his *Vices*, and recommend them to our Imitation. All the Good, which he can do, will not counterbalance the ill Conſequences of an Example tending to give diſadvantageous Impreſſions of Religion, and to diſcountenance that public and reverential Awe of the Deity, which is the ſureſt Guard of Virtue and the ſtrongeſt Reſtraint from Vice. Imitation is confeſſedly a ſtrong Principle of Ac-

tion, and the Imitation of the Richer to the lower Sort. Therefore He, who is acted by a *conſiſtent rational* Principle of Benevolence, will for the ſame Reaſon, that he is *benevolent*, *be*, or at leaſt *appear* to be, *devout*; which will be the *greateſt* Inſtance of his *Benevolence*: as his good Example may prevent thoſe Vices, and that Diſtreſs, the Conſequence of thoſe Vices, which an abandoned Profaneneſs and Ungodlineſs never fails to produce. SER. XVII

Many of thoſe, who are void of religious Principles, make *Politeneſs*, which ſhould be only the Ornament of their Behaviour, the ſole Rule of their Actions. *Morality* has nothing to do in the Caſe, (whatever Pretenſions they may make to it) which teaches Men not to *poliſh over* their Behaviour, but to be *intrinſically* good; not to *diſguiſe* their Paſſions, but to get the *better* of them. The Paſſion, for Inſtance, of Malice is equally ſtrong in ſome Men of a refined Education, as in thoſe, who have wanted that Advantage: The only Difference is, the former hate with a *well-bred* Malice and a courtly Animoſity; whereas the Hatred of the latter is more frank and *undiſſembled*: It diſcharges itſelf, which that

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of the former never does, in unſeemly, ſcurrilous and outragious Language. For the *Clothing* of Mens *Thoughts* differs, juſt as the *Clothing* of their *Bodies* does, according to their different Ranks: The Vulgar clothe their Thoughts, juſt as they do their Perſons, in the *moſt homely* and *coarſe* Attire: Whereas Men of Condition clothe theirs, which are often as corrupt as thoſe of the former, in a *genteeler* Dreſs and more *delicate* Apparel. Vice is the ſame in Both: In the One it is *an open Sepulchre*, foul, noiſom and unſightly: In the Other it is a Sepulchre *whited* over and beautified: What is *offenſive*, is carefully removed *out* of Sight, and nothing *appears*, whatever may *be* beneath, but what conveys *genteel* and *polite* Ideas. This is all thoſe Perſons mean, if they have any ſettled Meaning, (as far as one can judge from their Practice) who have no Regard for Chriſtianity, but yet are Advocates for the Beauty of Virtue. It is to practiſe ſome Virtues, or rather to put on the Appearances of ſome Virtues, ſuch as Generoſity, Courage, *&c.* becauſe they are becoming, genteel and reputable, give them a conſiderable Figure, and beſpeak an Elevation of Mind anſwerable to

their

their Dignity: In the mean Time, they leave others undone, ſuch as Humility, Faith, Meekneſs and Abſtinence; though as much founded upon Reaſon, as any other Virtues; merely becauſe They have the Misfortune to be unfaſhionable. They do not ſo much deteſt *Vice*, properly ſpeaking, as what is *low*, *vulgar* and *unbecoming* in each Vice, as I obſerved before in that of Malice, and might give many more Inſtances. Decency is the Idol, which engroſſes all their Homage, excluſive of true genuine inward Virtue. And if that be the Caſe, they may be ſaid to do, juſt as the Heathens did, who *ſacrificed to the Graces*, but did *not ſerve the God of Heaven and Earth.* They do not abſtain from Sin as ſuch, but from Sin under ſuch Modifications, as make it ſhocking and inconſiſtent with *fine Manners.* SER. XVII

After all, I will not deny, that *the* Head *of Man is deceitful, who can know it?* It miſtakes mere Notions for Realities, as ſome talk and write about Chance, Fortune, and Neceſſity, as if they had an actual Exiſtence. It may ſometimes imagine, what is a mere *notional* Beauty of Virtue, *viz.* a Beauty *diſtinct* from it's Advantages, to be ſome-

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thing *real* and *ſubſtantial*. It may form a *fine* Idea, and then fall in love with it's own Creation. For Enthuſiaſm does not *confine* itſelf to Religion, it extends itſelf to Virtue and to every Thing elſe. Our Notions generally take a Tincture from our Temper. And Men, whoſe *glowing* and *romantic Imagination* makes *plain Senſe* flat and *taſteleſs* to them, will *diſreliſh* ſuch a *Morality* as the Chriſtian, which is *founded* on plain *ſober Senſe*: They muſt image to themſelves ſomething *rapturous* and *extatick*: And when they meet with no Object of this Kind in the *Nature* of Things, they ſtrike out one for themſelves by the Heat of a prolific Fancy. Rapt up into the *airy Regions* of Viſions and Chimeras, where they *walk in a vain Shew* and pleaſe *themſelves in vain*; they look down with Diſdain upon meaner Mortals of a cooler Turn, who follow unaffected Virtue upon *ſolid Ground*. Sanguine Men are ſeldom *content* with Things as they *are*: To take a Liking to them, they muſt *imagine* Beauties, which they *have not*. And thus ſome may, for ought I know, have gone beyond the Verge of cool Reaſon, and worked themſelves up into an Enthuſiaſtick Ardour for Virtue by

the Help of I know not what viſionary and diſintereſted Charms, which they have ſuppoſed it to have, without any View to it's real Excellencies, the Advantages it brings here and hereafter. The Myſtery of the Affair lyes here. They feel a Warmth of Soul, when they have been long contemplating the fair Idea of Virtue; Now they imagine, that it is the Beauty of Virtue, all-lovely in itſelf, which warms them; and that *That* muſt be ſomething *real*, not viſionary, which can impart a *real Warmth*: Whereas there is *Nothing real*, but the *Ferment* and Glow of the *Imagination*, which always takes Fire by dwelling very long upon any Object. Inſtances, however, of this *lovely* Frenzy are very rare: The Groſs of our Species are not ſuſceptible of ſo *fine* an Enthuſiaſm.

The Generality of Men, who pretend to Morality independently of Religion, (except thoſe in whom the original Goodneſs of their Nature gets the better of the Badneſs of their Principles,) are ſuch, as have ſtudied and practiſed the Art of being eaſy and agreeable, without incommoding themſelves, or denying themſelves any Pleaſure within Bounds. The Difference between the

SER. XVI. the Vulgar and Them conſiſts in this: that the former, like Marble in the Block, retain a *native Ruggedneſs:* whereas the latter have an equally impenetrable, but a more *ſmooth* and *poliſhed Hardneſs* of Heart. *Cheap* Favours, an inſignificant Eaſineſs of Good-Manners, and all the *Outſide* of Benevolence you may expect from them: But do not expect from them any ſolid and material Services; do not expect, that any Thing you can *ſay* ſhould touch their *Hearts*, or that they will *do* any Thing, which comes warm *from thence.* Their pretended Benevolence is ſomewhat like the Religion of the Phariſees, who were inſipidly exact, and frivolouſly punctual in *little unconcerning* Niceties, ſuch as *Tithing Mint, Aniſe and Cummin*, but neglected the *weightier Matters* of the Law, ſuch as *Judgment, Mercy* and Truth: And to Both may be applied our Saviour's Saying, *Theſe ought Ye to have done, and not to leave the Other undone.* Benevolence, any further than it is conſtitutional, in moſt of Thoſe who diſclaim all Piety and Devotion, is a fine ſounding Word, of which we hear a great deal in their Converſation; but ſee little or nothing in their Practice. Is there a Man who,

who, though a Stranger to Piety; yet, without being miſled by Caprice or Oſtentation, goes on in a regular uniform habitual Practice of doing Good; who raiſed above the common Wants of Life feels the Miſeries of his Fellow-Creatures with almoſt as much Senſibility, as if he knew by Experience what it was to want; and relieves them with all the Bounty of one, who is not afraid to want himſelf? Such a Man would not be *far from the Kingdom of Heaven.* But I am afraid, ſuch a Character is, for the moſt Part, viſionary and romantic. We run from one Extreme to another: And Benevolence without Piety, to which it is cloſely allied, is commonly as much mere Pretence and Hypocriſy; as Piety without Benevolence was during the Time of the Grand Rebellion. Then Men were for giving *Glory to God*, without ſhewing *Good-Will to Men*, or promoting *Peace upon Earth:* And, ſince that Time, ſome have ſet up a Principle of Morality and Good-Will to Man, excluſive of all Devotion and Homage to the Deity. Both are inſeparably united; and what God and Reaſon have joined together, let not Man put aſunder. But Folly, like Matter, is continually ſhifting the Scene, and

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and ſubſiſting under different Modifications. It is the Fate of ſome People to be governed by a Set of Words without any determinate Meaning annexed to them. *Seeking the Lord*, when Men were ravaging the Nation, was not more a Cant Term and mere Jargon, than the agreeable ſoft Sound of Benevolence is, generally ſpeaking, at preſent, without that, which muſt be the Baſis of it, an affectionate Love of God. A Man may indeed *do* Good occaſionally *without* any Principle, the very Brutes doing ſeveral Acts that are materially good: But to *be* habitually good, to be all of a Piece and conſiſtent throughout, there muſt be a fixed *Principle* of Goodneſs woven into the Soul. And He that will not do Good to his Fellow-Creatures for the Sake of God, who created him; cannot, conſiſtently with Reaſon, be obliged to do it upon other Motives. To leſſen therefore our Love of God, is to weaken our Love of Mankind. That God would place to his own Account, whatever was done for *his* Sake to our diſtreſſed Brethren: is a Motive to do Good as much ſuperior to all others, as He Himſelf is to all other Beings.

An excellent *Grecian* Hiſtorian *, who lived before thoſe Principles of Irreligion had gotten Footing in *Rome*, to which he aſcribes the Ruin of his own Country, has an Obſervation very appoſite to my preſent Purpoſe. I ſhall beg leave to tranſcribe it, as I find it tranſlated by a very eminent Writer †. SER. XVII

" See now the Difference, [*i. e.* between a ſtrict Obſervance of Religion and a Diſregard to it] " in *Greece*, he, that is in- " truſted with the public Money, (to paſs " by other Matters) though it be but of a " ſingle Talent, and though he gives a " ten-fold Security, cannot be brought to " diſcharge his Engagements: While a- " mong the *Romans* the mere Religion of " an Oath keeps thoſe, who in the pub- " lic Adminiſtration or in foreign Nego- " tiations have vaſt Sums of Money paſſing " through their Hands from violating their " Honour and Uprightneſs. And whereas " in other Places (where Irreligion prevails) " it is rare to find a Man, who keeps his

* *Polybius.*

† See the whole Paſſage in the *divine Legation*, vol. 1ſt, page 297, 1ſt Edition, with the Author's very judicious Reflections upon it.

" Hands

Ser. XVII " Hands clean; on the contrary among the " *Romans* it is as rare to find any offending " in this Kind."

Thus far this Writer, from whoſe Country thoſe very irreligious Notions were ſoon after introduced into *Rome*, which, in Proceſs of Time, proved deſtructive to it too.

I ſhall cloſe this Diſcourſe with the following Remark, *viz.* That though a Man ſhould violate ſome or even all the *ſocial* Duties; yet as long as a Regard to the Deity was not quite extinct in him, there would be ſtill *ſome Hold* to be taken, and ſome faint Hopes of reclaiming Him. The *Root* of Virtue (for *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom)* is ſtill in the Ground: and it may yet put forth again, though ſeveral of the conſiderable Branches have been maimed and lopped off: But when a reverential Awe of his Maker is quite worn out and defaced, then indeed the *Ax is laid unto the Root of the Tree:* The very Foundation, upon which the Hopes of Amendment could be built, is deſtroyed: His Recovery is deſperate and his Ruin ſealed: There is nothing left to curb him from Vice, and bring him back again to the Practice of Virtue.

The End of the Firſt Volume.

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